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The Best New Hotels in the World

p.33

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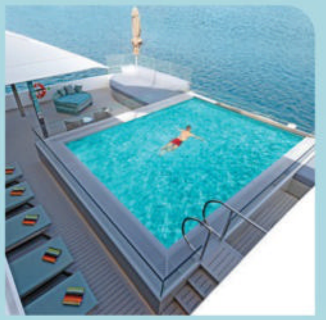

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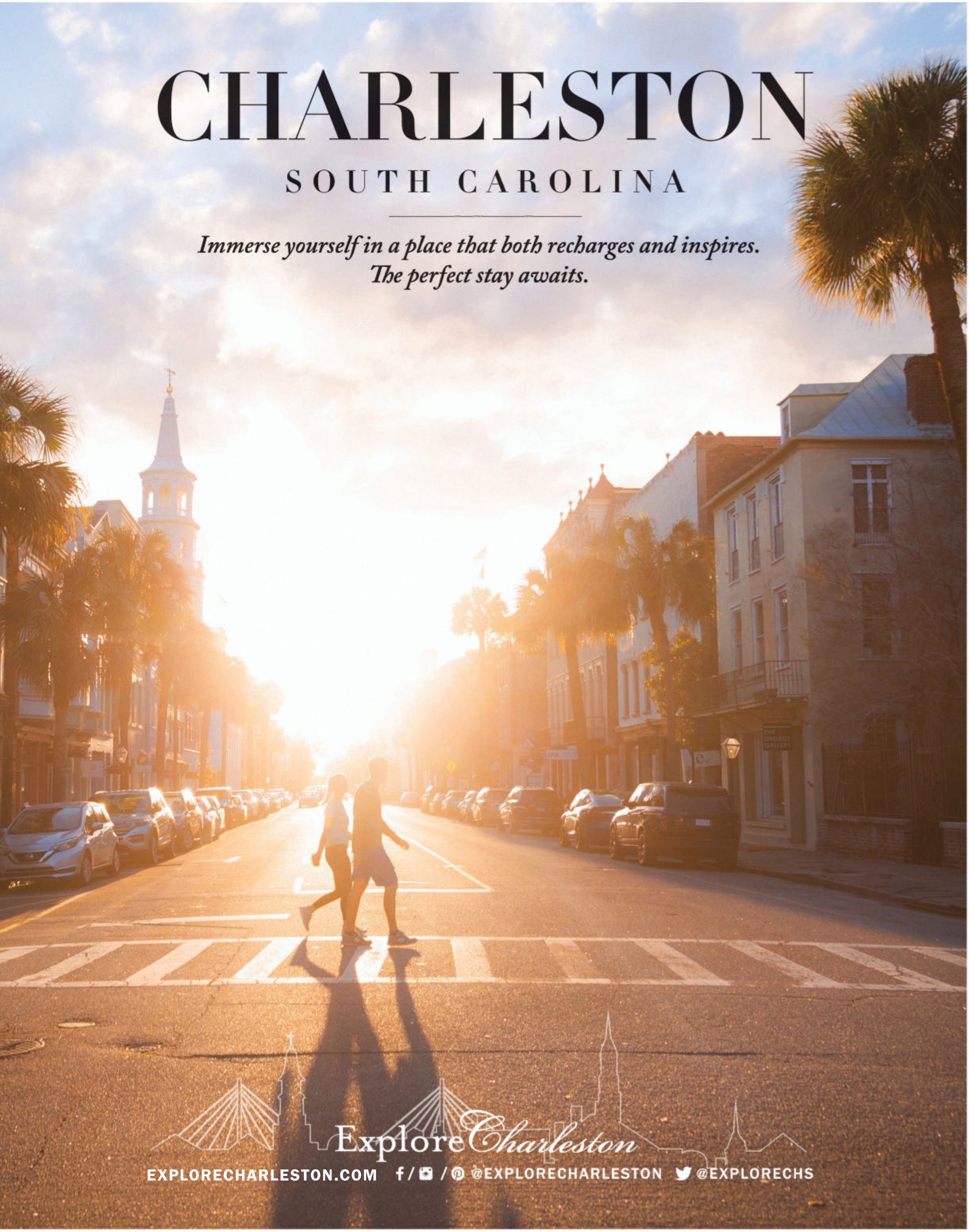

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Dig into three-cup chicken and stinky tofu at Taiwanese *rechao* restaurants. These eateries are the perfect metaphor for the island's diverse heritage.

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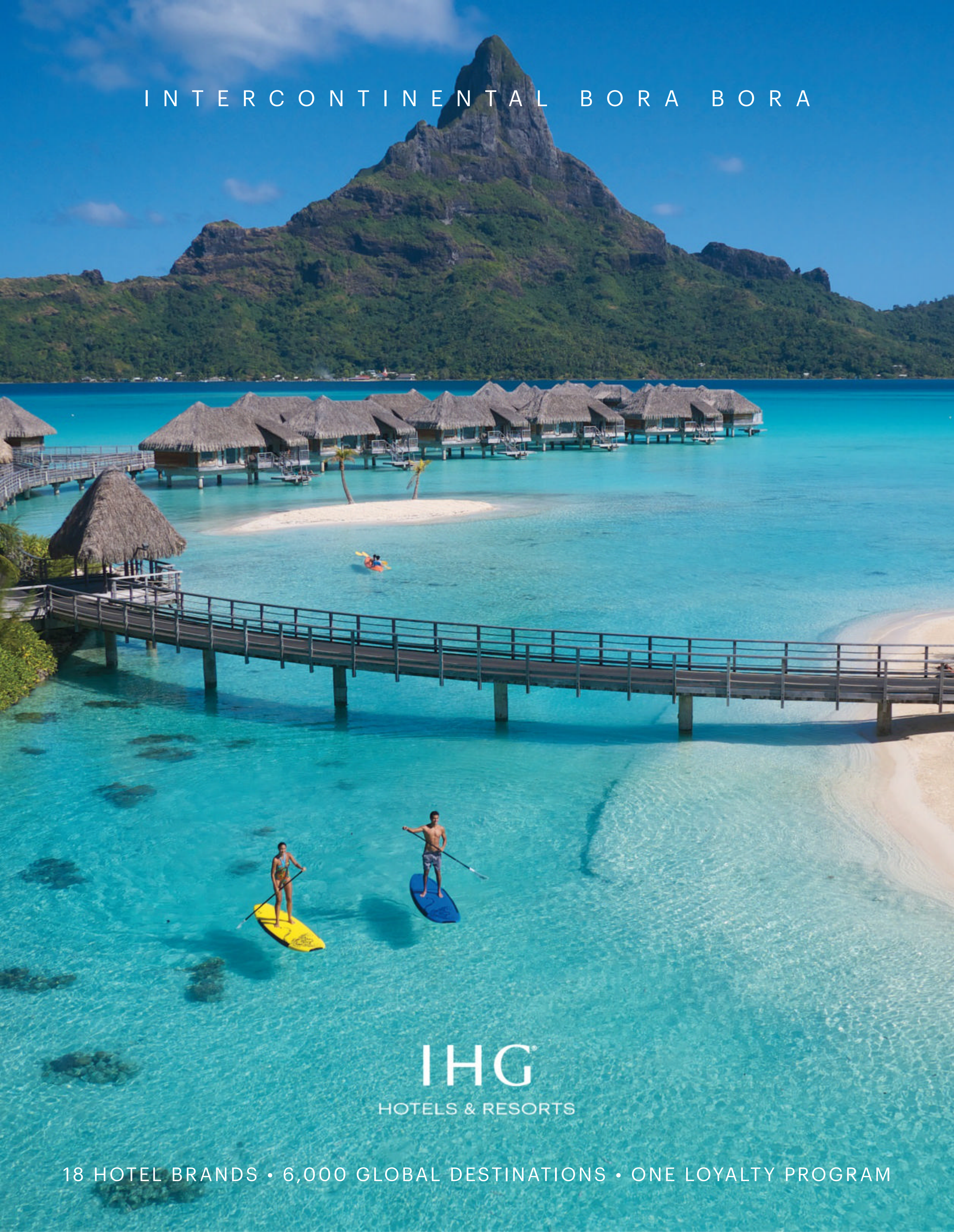
NATIVE AMERICA

For over a decade, Matika Wilbur traveled across North America to document more than 500 tribal nations—from an Indigenous perspective.

MATIKA WILBUR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Photograph by Muhammad Fadli

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MY FATHER'S HOUSE

In 2022, journalist Daniela Gerson traveled to Uzbekistan on a quest: to honor her family's complicated history and find the home where her father was born.

Uzbekistan was a place written in his passport, obituaries, and death certificate. But it was a mystery to him.

ILLUSTRATIONS, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JOEY YU, LUONGDOO, LAUREN TAMAKI
PHOTOS, LEFT TO RIGHT: RICKY MONTI, ILYES GRIYEB

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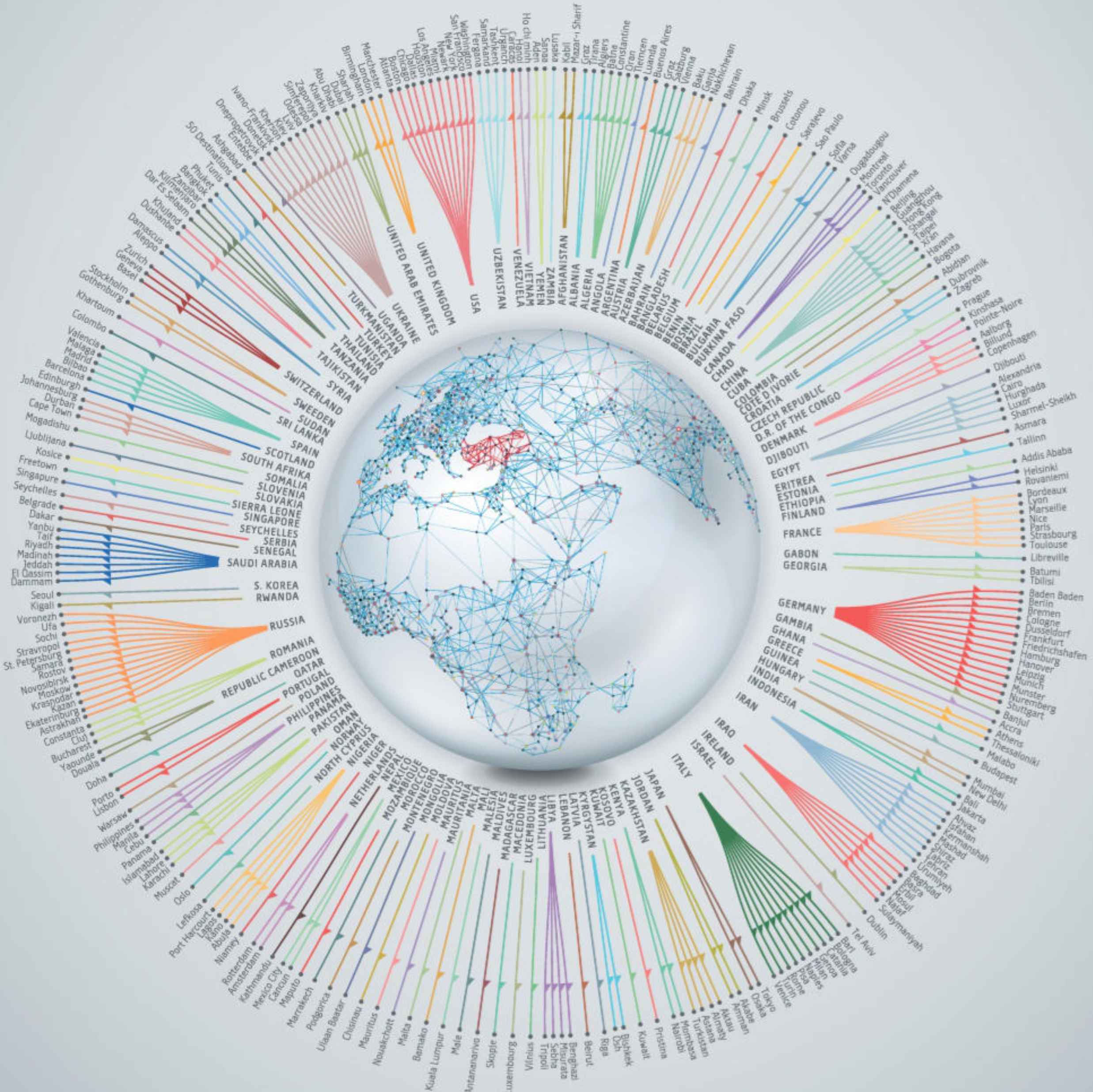

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Tiny as it is, Costa Rica still serves as a model and beacon for other countries on the importance of preserving the environment.

TREASURE ISLAND
p.84

KATIE ORLINSKY

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FOUNDERS Greg Sullivan & Joe Diaz

What's the most amazing hotel you've ever stayed at?

"In Egypt, the Sofitel Legend Old Cataract Aswan. Put aside that it's sumptuous, gorgeous, and overlooks the Nile, it's where Agatha Christie wrote *Death on the Nile*, and you can tour her suite." **—B.C.**

"Cheetah Plains in South Africa. It's a fully solar-powered safari lodge where guests can spot the Big Five from electric jeeps before going back to their private villa for guided winetastings under the stars." **—B.B.**

"Located near Big Bend National Park and built with recycled materials, La Loma Del Chivo is like an art project that happens to be a hotel. It's a perfect metaphor for West Texas's big personality." **—M.H.**

"Portugal's Six Senses Douro Valley embodies sustainability principles, phenomenal design, delicious food, world-class wines, and a spa to dream about—all in one magical setting." **—J.D.**

"The Oberoi Amarvilas in Agra, India, offers an incredibly up-close view of the Taj Mahal. The hotel's service made the experience epic." **—B.B.**

"I often daydream of Kimamaya by Odin in Niseko, Japan. The staff's hospitality (and their breakfast) made waking up each day there a delight." **—J.B.**

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AN RONG XU

Photographer

Born in China and raised in New York City, photographer and director An Rong Xu currently lives in Taiwan with his wife and newborn. For **Tsiáh-pn̄g**! (p.96), Xu shot the food, lively scenes, and unsung chefs at *rechao* eateries in the country's capital. "I'm always drawn to [photographing] people who work in restaurants because they remind me of my father, who was a chef," Xu says. "[The shoot] felt like I was spending time with him." Xu's work has appeared in the *New York Times*, *Rolling Stone*, and the *New Yorker*. Find Xu on Instagram @anrizzy.

LISA GRAINGER

Writer

In this year's **Stay List** (p.33), travel journalist Lisa Grainger writes about one of the world's best new hotels, Portugal's Pa.te.os, which has a striking brutalist facade that pairs well with its Scandinavian-inspired interior design. "[The hotel] offers exactly what I want: incredible style, simplicity, and architecture that shows off the beautiful surroundings," Grainger says. She is an editor at the *Times* (U.K.) and has also written for *Condé Nast Traveller* and *Travel + Leisure*. Keep up with her on Instagram @lisa.grainger.

DANIELA GERSON

Writer

Journalist Daniela Gerson has written about immigration and multicultural communities for 20 years. An associate professor at California State University, Northridge, Gerson is currently on sabbatical to develop a book about her own family's migration story. In **My Father's House** (p.79), Gerson recounts traveling to Uzbekistan to retrace her family's life in a new country in the wake of the Holocaust. "I've asked people, 'Where do you think the most Polish Jews survived the Holocaust?' " she says. "Nobody I've talked to has said 'in Muslim Central Asia.' It's an important history to remember." Follow her on Twitter @dhgerson.

MATIKA WILBUR

Photographer and Writer

Documentary photographer Matika Wilbur, whose Native name is Tsa-Tsiq (which means "she who teaches"), is from the Swinomish and Tulalip Tribes. In November 2012, Wilbur began traveling the country to document more than 500 sovereign Tribal Nations that live in "what is now known as the United States." She describes the decade-long chronicling process in her new book, *Project 562: Changing the Way We See Native America* (Ten Speed Press), which is excerpted in **Native America** (p.106). "American historical amnesia has rewritten events to make its own history palatable," Wilbur says. "Misrepresentation has a real effect on the lives of Indigenous people." Find her work on Instagram @Project_562.

MONA GABLE

Writer

Science, social injustice, and adventure travel: These are the topics that captivate Los Angeles–based reporter Mona Gable. Her interests converge in **Treasure Island** (p.84), in which she examines Costa Rica's decision to preserve 30 percent of its ocean to protect the country's biodiverse marine environments and combat climate change. "It's one thing to say 'We have this protected marine reserve,' and it's another thing to make sure that it works," Gable says. She is also the author of *Searching for Savanna: The Murder of One Native American Woman and the Violence Against the Many* (Atria Books). Follow her on Instagram @monagable.

LUONGDOO

Illustrator

"I love thinking about the layers of people's everyday lives," says Luongdoo, who created the art for **Welcoming Committee** (p.68), a showcase of 11 hospitality customs across the world. "In this piece, I arranged the groups in a way that made it seem like they were neighboring families." In addition to his illustration practice, Luongdoo (who lives in Ho Chi Minh City) is currently archiving a collection of vintage Vietnamese stamps. His work has been featured in the *New York Times*, *New Scientist*, and *Elle Vietnam*. See more of his art on Instagram @luongdoo.

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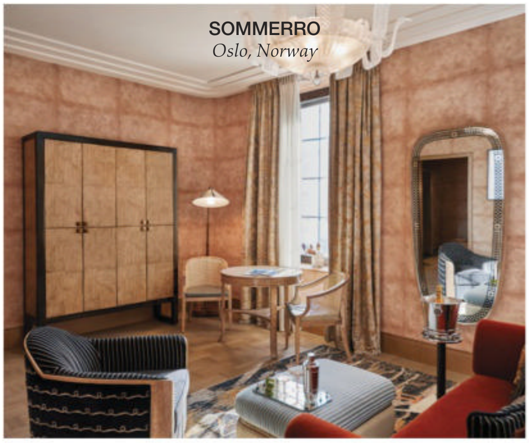

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Jennifer Flowers in the Plaza Hotel in 1987, with her brother Justin in the background.

COURTESY JENNIFER FLOWERS

Homes Away From Home

BETWEEN 1984 AND 1988, I was a real-life Eloise.

My dad served as managing director of the Plaza Hotel in New York City. Like the heroine of the classic children's book series by Kay Thompson, I lived on the property with my family. I absorbed the daily rhythm of life at this historic address while Yoko Ono, Barbara Walters, and Liberace passed through its halls. I'd shadow my friend Louise, the housekeeper who kept an eye on me, as she went from room to room, teaching me how to tuck bed corners while telling me stories about her home in Jamaica.

One day, my mom, brother, and I were riding the elevator with the actor Anthony Perkins of *Psycho* fame. When we arrived on Perkins's floor, my brother barked "Scat!," eliciting a warm smile from the actor, giggles from me, and a look of horror from my mom.

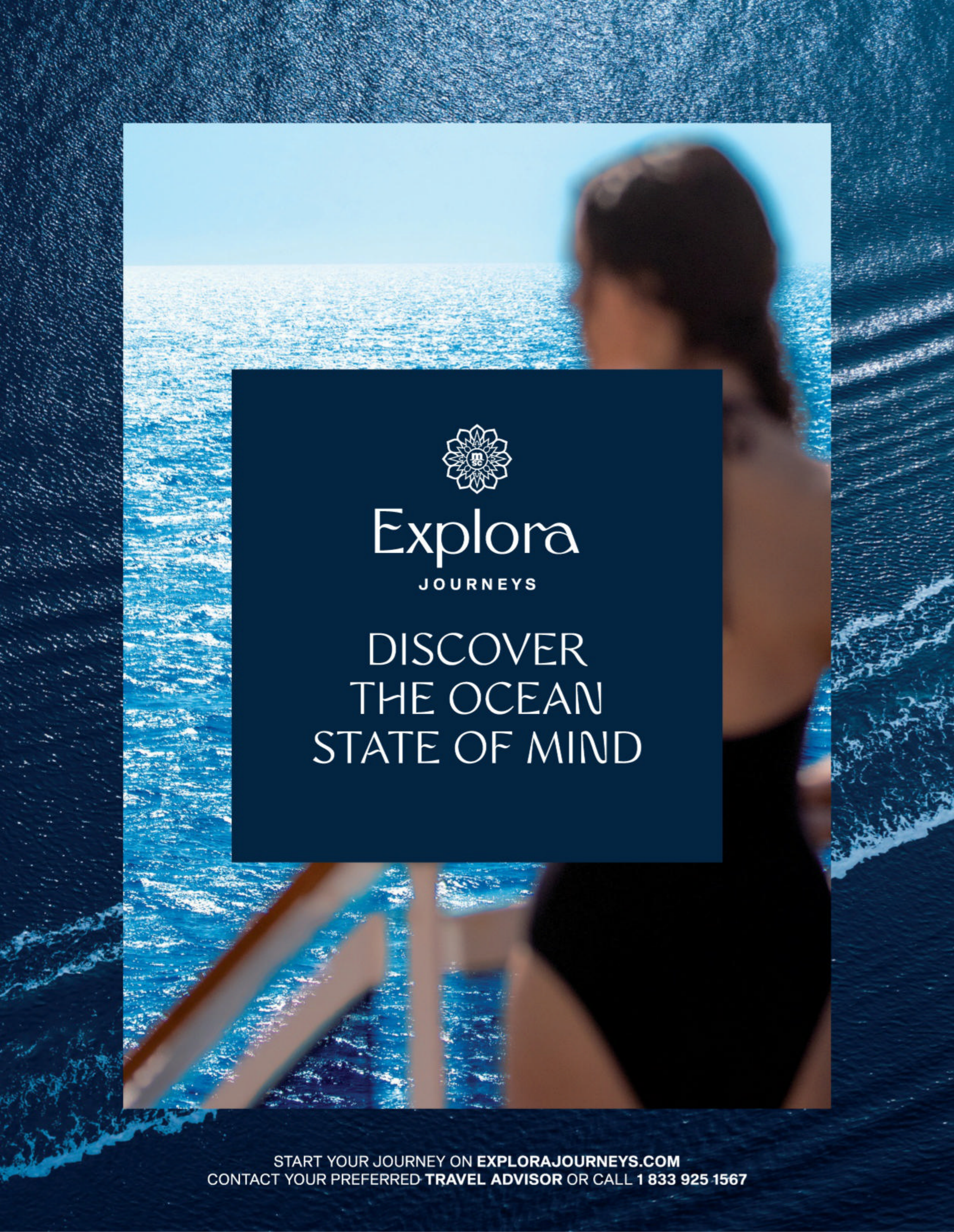
Childhood antics aside, I saw guests get married, celebrate birthdays, and gossip over tea at the Plaza. (They also partied here. Though it was well before my time, Truman Capote hosted his famous Black and White Ball in the Grand Ballroom in 1966.)

I grew up understanding that at the best hotels, guests simply feel at home. And not by accident: The people behind the scenes create this feeling through extraordinary service and a passion for the place where they live and work. In landscapes more remote than Manhattan, the presence of a hotel can make it easier for travelers to visit a destination at all.

For these reasons and more, I'm so proud to publish our 2023 Stay List, AFAR's yearly compendium of the world's best new hotels (page 33). In it, we showcase properties that strive to tread lightly on the land by reducing energy use, waste, and water consumption. Others on the list foster cultural exchange between visitors and residents. And still others use biophilic design to connect us more deeply with nature.

I'm not Eloise anymore, but I still get a charge from that distinctive feeling of community only a very special hotel can create. I hope you do, too.

See you on the road,
JENNIFER FLOWERS
Senior Deputy Editor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From culinary picks by chef Juan José Cuevas to conservationist Raimundo Espinoza's favorite destinations and ways to explore culture courtesy of artist Mauro Díaz, we tapped local experts for these curated Puerto Rico recommendations. Keep reading and discover why, no matter your passion, a meaningful travel experience always awaits on the Island.

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Museo de las Américas
See exhibits on the Island's multicultural legacy, housed in 19th-century former military barracks in Old San Juan.

Taína Route
Visit unearthed Indigenous sites such as the Parque Ceremonial Indígena de Caguana in Utuado.

Nature + Wellness

Relax among natural wonders.

Hot Springs
Experience healing thermal baths in Coamo.

El Yunque
Hike to waterfalls and float downriver at the U.S.'s only tropical rain forest.

La Parguera
Scuba dive by day and swim in a bioluminescent bay by night in Lajas.

Food + Drink

Savor the culinary culture's diverse influences.

Museo Castillo Serrallés
Learn about the history of rum during a tour in Ponce.

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Check into this bed-and-breakfast perched atop a mountain that hosts pop-up dinners with top area chefs in Cayey.

Learn more at DiscoverPuertoRico.com

DISCOVER Puerto Rico

UNITED VOICES by AFAR

Puerto Rico Travel Stories by Those Who Know the Island Best

***United Voices by AFAR* pairs emerging writers, photographers, and video directors from Puerto Rico with AFAR editors for the ultimate in Island inspiration.**

Discover Puerto Rico and AFAR recently launched *United Voices by AFAR* to showcase the power of deeper, more meaningful travel. We hosted an on-Island summit in April with AFAR editors and Puerto Rican content creators. Together, they experienced Puerto Rico's diversity, culture, and eco-friendly attractions. In the weeks and months ahead, look out for AFAR.com stories highlighting this stunning Island's hidden corners—told by the people who know it best.

Check out Puerto Rico stories at afar.com/UnitedVoicesPuertoRico

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101

restaurants, bars, food trucks, lounges, breweries, distilleries, tap rooms, saloons, and holes in the wall are spread across Sheridan County. That's 101 different ways to apres adventure in the craft capital of Wyoming. We are also home to more than 40 hotels, motels, RV parks, and B&Bs.

4

seasons in which to get WYO'd. If you're a skijoring savant, you'll want to check out the Winter Rodeo in February. July features the beloved Sheridan WYO Rodeo. Spring and fall are the perfect time to chase cool mountain streams or epic backcountry lines.

∞

Sheridan features a thriving, historic downtown district, with western allure, hospitality and good graces to spare; a vibrant arts scene; bombastic craft culture; a robust festival and events calendar; and living history from one corner of the county to the next.

Unpacked Notes on Ethical Travel

Act of Service

How to honor the unseen workers who make our travel experiences memorable.

by **LATRIA GRAHAM**

Illustrations by **JOEY YU**

WHEN I WAS 12, I became the shopkeeper for my family's roadside produce stand. My life, as most people would have defined it, was small: The South Carolina town that contained my family's farm had a population of 162 people, and a good number of them were related to me. Most folks who stopped by were on their way to somewhere else—the freshwater lake for bass fishing, a girls' weekend in Charlotte or Atlanta. These out-of-towners would marvel at our prices, meant to be affordable for locals. "Everything is so cheap," they'd say, filling their baskets with okra, tomatoes, and cantaloupes I'd picked that morning. I will never forget the nauseous feeling that unfurled in me when the things my family worked so hard to cultivate were described this way. Still, I always accepted the money with a smile, the way my forebears taught me, grateful for it, even if it came at the expense of my self-esteem.

In college, I worked as waitstaff and in housekeeping for a variety of my university's special events: concerts, receptions, alumni reunions. I spent early mornings stripping sheets, perfecting hospital corners, or sprawled on the floor, stomach down, peering under beds to make sure visitors hadn't left anything. Rarely did anyone ever say "thank you." This means that for close to two decades I worked in jobs where I was invisible or, at best, looked down on as "the help."

I have always understood that who I am as a person and what I do for a living are two different states of being that just happen to share a body. I learned from an early age that many folks are in their occupation for a variety of reasons: obligations, circumstances, or lack of resources. I promised that when I got my chance, I would be the type of traveler I wished I saw more of in my hometown—respectful, curious without being judgmental, and appreciative of the work.

I promised that when I got my chance, I would be the type of traveler I wished I saw more of in my hometown.

Travel is an enormous privilege. As a writer and a professor, I get to move through the world in a way that was out of reach for my ancestors and is still out of reach for many people. I'm grateful my life allows me to do these things, so in turn, I do what I can to help the people I meet feel seen. I read name tags and call staff members by their names; if I don't know how to pronounce one, I ask. I open myself up for small talk. Sometimes people I meet want to know about the world that I'm from, and I listen as they tell me about theirs. Because regardless of what someone does for a living, they're a person—each with their own stories and dreams.

Some folks just want to do their jobs and aren't in the mood to chat with guests. Maybe they're too busy to care. I know I've had those days. But I have also seen that a thoughtful compliment can make somebody's day. At the end of a hotel stay, I mention to the manager the people who provided impeccable service or paid meticulous attention to detail that went above my expectations.

Before I leave my hotel room for the day, I also write a few lines to housekeeping. "Thank you for providing me with a safe, clean place to stay," I jot on a piece of hotel stationery, which I put on the TV stand along with my daily gratuity, usually between $10 and $20 on the days I request housekeeping. If I order in-room breakfast multiple days in a row, I leave compliments for the cook in the margins of the menu before I place my order on the doorknob. I don't expect anything when I leave my notes and tips. This is just my way of telling the people I don't see face to face that I appreciate them.

Recently, I found myself on the other end of this experience. After several days of leaving notes for housekeeping while on a mother-daughter trip to Charleston, South Carolina, I returned to our room one evening to a note on the bed. Stephoney, the person who serviced our room, had responded: "A happy and blessed holiday to you and your family, and all the best for the New Year." It was a small gesture—one simple sentence—but I felt the warmth and humanity in it. It's the feeling I hope others get when they see my messages. And for that reason, I'll keep writing them.

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LuLu's
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The HANGOUT
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Gulf State Park Pier
Fort Morgan

A First-Timer's Guide to

A Blissful Vacation in Gulf Shores and Orange Beach

For a dreamy beach vacation, the coastal communities of Gulf Shores and Orange Beach are some of Alabama's best-kept secrets. Use this map to inspire your next trip with stylish accommodations, rich biodiversity, and Gulf-to-table seafood—all with a dash of modern Southern hospitality—for an adventure filled with natural pleasures and plentiful amenities.

Gulf Shores

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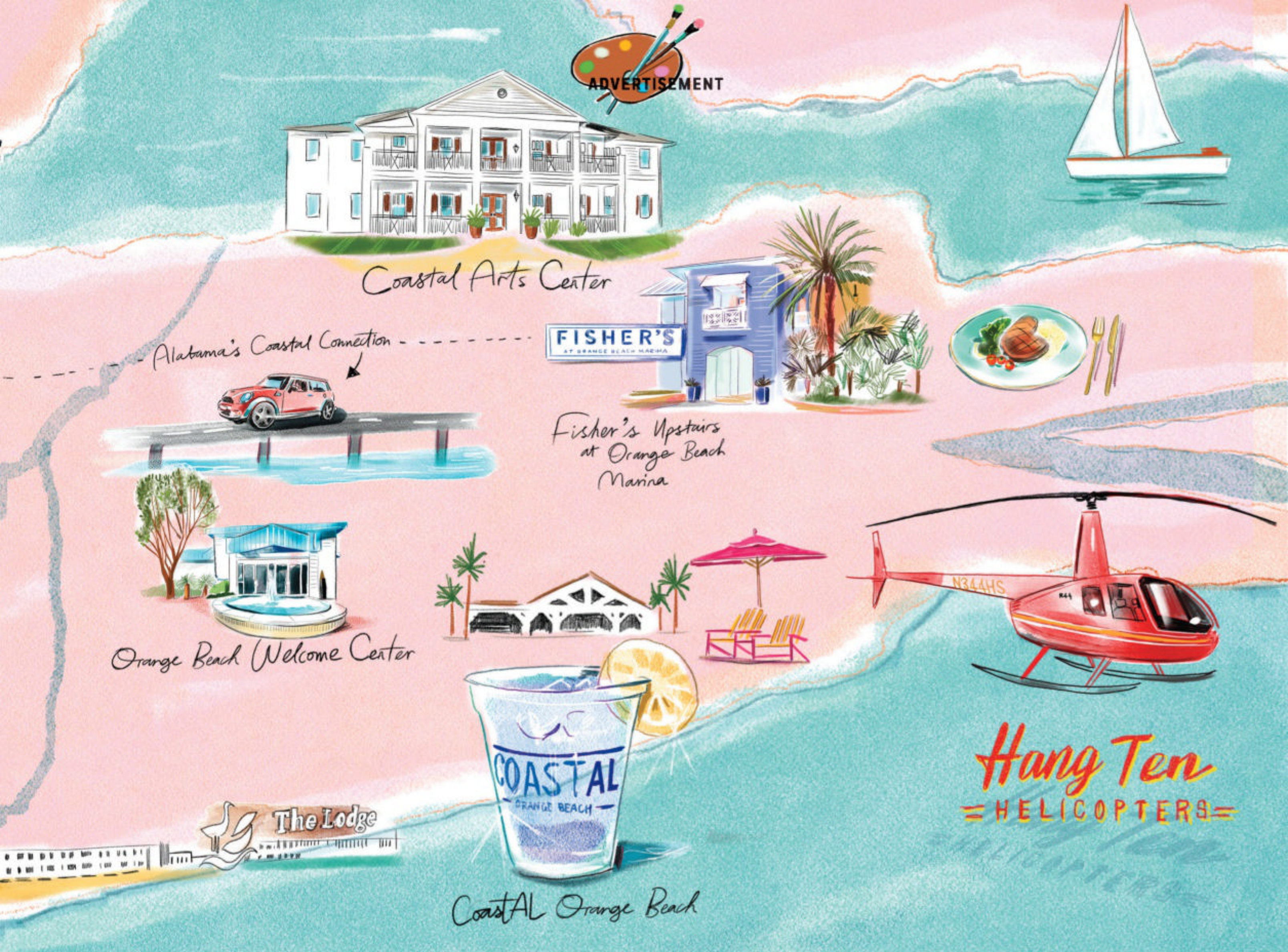
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AT ORANGE BEACH MARINA
Fisher's Upstairs at Orange Beach Marina
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Gulf State Park Pier

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The Lodge at Gulf State Park

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LuLu's Restaurant

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Orange Beach

Enjoy local shopping, boating, and family time.

CoastAL

Dine on tuna tacos and sip tropical cocktails to live music at this waterfront restaurant.

The Wharf

Browse boutiques, grab a meal, listen to live bands, and ride the Ferris wheel at this waterfront entertainment district.

Coastal Arts Center

Peruse fine art by Gulf Coast artists or make your own in glassblowing and ceramics classes.

Orange Beach Welcome Center

Stop in for your vacation guide and all the 411—and free Wi-Fi.

Fisher's

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Hang Ten Helicopters

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Overland and Water Adventures

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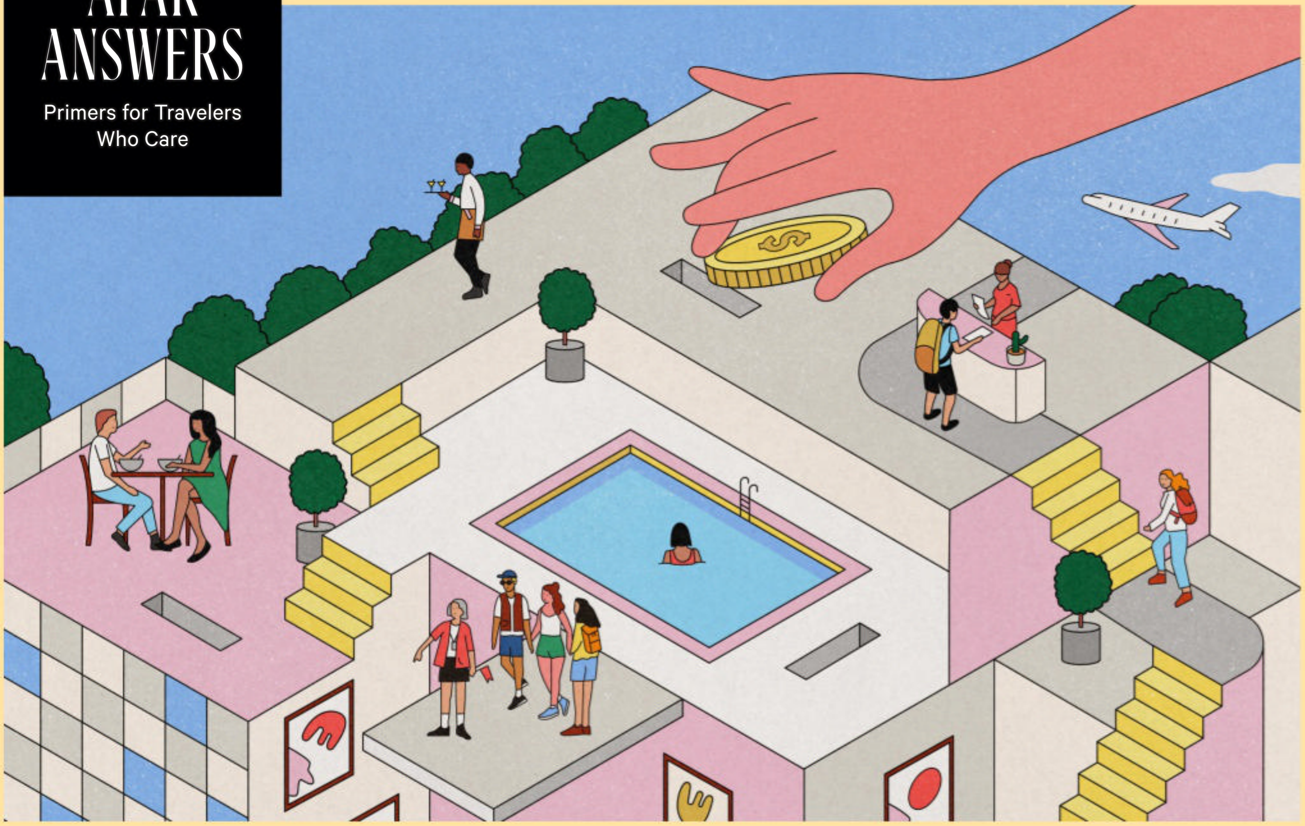
GULF SHORES & ORANGE BEACH TOURISM
Alabama's White-Sand Beaches

AFAR ANSWERS

Primers for Travelers Who Care

by **TIM CHESTER** | Illustration by **SARGAM GUPTA**



Is My Travel Money Going to the Right Places?

As responsible travelers, we like to think that most of what we spend goes directly to the communities we visit. Turns out that's a bit of a myth. Last fall, a report by the World Tourism Organization estimated that just $5 of $100 spent by tourists from developed countries stays in a developing destination's economy. Most of that money goes to airlines, hotels, and multinational companies headquartered a long way from the intended destination. However, travel dollars *can* support local economies and communities—if we make careful decisions.

As Holly Tuppen, author of *Sustainable Travel: The Essential Guide to Positive-Impact Adventures* (White Lion Publishing, 2021), notes, "This can take quite a bit of research, but the reward will be threefold: Not only will you know where your money ends up, but you will be supporting a business that is probably more mindful of its impact on local people and place, and you will benefit from a much more authentic and rewarding experience."

Start with the right tour operator

Many outfitters support the economies in which they operate, and they let their guests know. AFAR Travel Vanguard honoree **G Adventures** publishes a Ripple Score showing how much money from each trip goes to area businesses. **Modern Adventure**, a Portland, Oregon–based B Corp company, says that 67 cents of every dollar made from its trips is spent in the region, benefiting restaurateurs, hoteliers, guides, and Indigenous communities. The organization scouts community partners, "auditing their practices" and checking that "they're paying fair wages and practicing responsible tourism," says the company's CEO and founder, Luis Vargas.

Travelers can adopt some of this methodology themselves, Vargas insists. "It takes less effort than it ever has before," he says, recommending two booking sites focused on sustainable stays and community support: **Holiable** and **Responsible Travel**. Another similar option is **Kind Traveler**, which offers discounted hotel rates once travelers have made a minimum $10 donation to a local charity each time they book.

Think about hotel ownership

One way to keep your money in the destination is to stay at a locally owned or independent hotel. Around 80 percent of the 400-plus properties listed by the **Leading Hotels of the World** group are family-owned businesses.

However, you also want to ensure that your accommodation employs locals and pays them fairly—not necessarily a given, even when the property is locally owned. "There are cases where foreign-owned businesses employ locals in a sustainable way and contribute positively to the local economy," says Wes Espinosa, interim executive director of the Center for Responsible Travel.

It's not always easy to suss out this information, but you might find something on a hotel's website. You could also send an email to the general manager and ask whether the hotel employs locals. "That's a compelling question to ask," Vargas says.

Spend locally

Once you're on a trip, seek out independent businesses over McChains. It has an impact. Florencio Moreno, who leads trips across Mexico for Modern Adventure, says that tourism dollars help artisan weavers continue their craft rather than leave to find work elsewhere. "This income helps protect our cultural traditions," he says. "It allows our local makers to pass down their skills."

Espinosa adds that tourism boards can also be a resource. "They'll tell you what businesses are locally owned, where you can find authentic local food from X culture or Y community."

Tip effectively

Don't forget out-of-sight workers when leaving gratuities. I just returned from a stay at Nanuku resort in Fiji, where guests were encouraged to make a contribution to a team fund. That means that the overnight security staff can benefit as much as, say, the masseuses.

We'll never know exactly where every last travel dollar goes, but we can try our best. As Vargas says, it's all about making great places to visit great places to live: a "virtuous circle of supporting the very identity and reason that we travel to these places." Ⓐ

Have a travel question for AFAR? Write to us at answers@afar.com.

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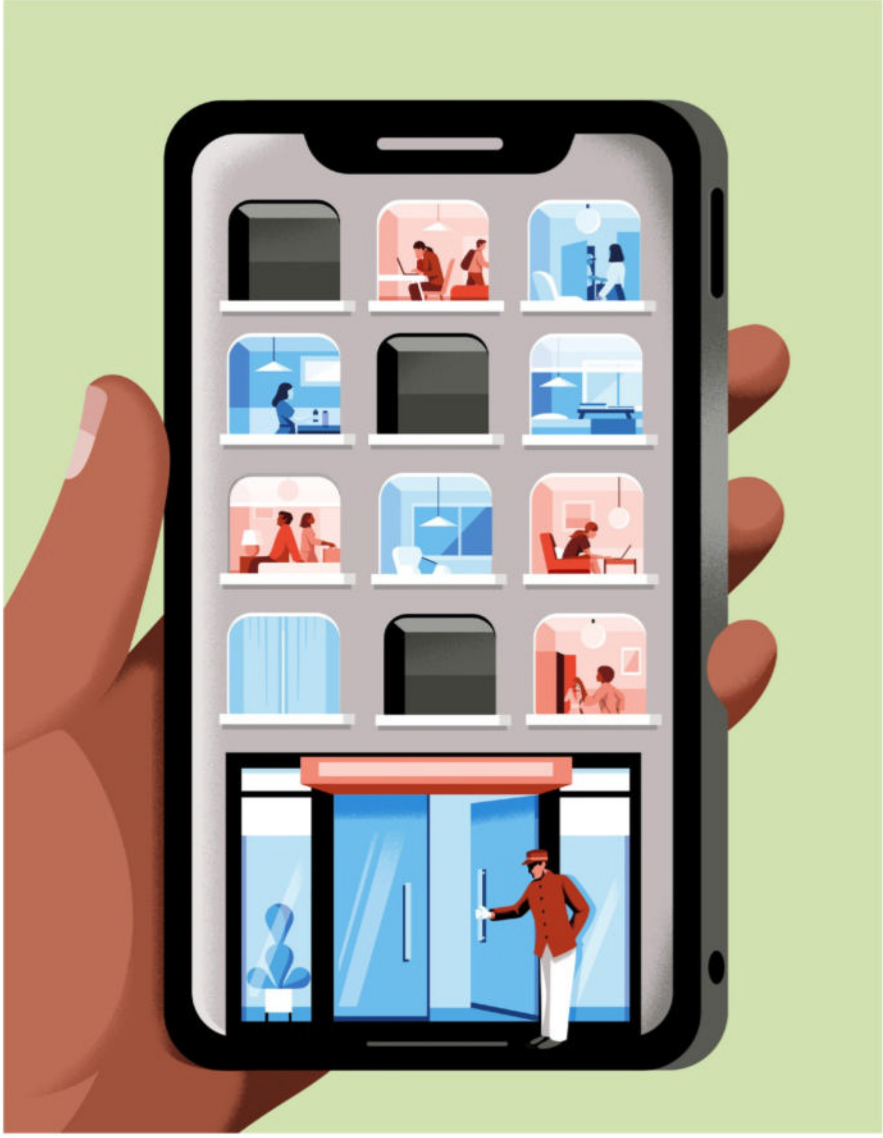
The Future of Hotels

by **ELAINE GLUSAC** | Illustrations by **NATHALIE LEES**

“How can I help you?” has long been the check-in desk opening line. But these days, as our lives, values, and reasons for travel have all blended together in the wake of the pandemic, the more relevant question is coming from hotel guests themselves: “What can you do for me?” In response, the hospitality world is channeling its resources to adapt to work-life trends, sustainability expectations, and personalized technology—and to operate in cleaner, smarter, more flexible ways that intuitively say, “I get you.”



BEYOND PAPER STRAWS

By now, guests are used to signs recommending they reuse towels and forgo bedsheet changes. Today, hotels are adding to these basic sustainability initiatives and taking on more responsibility. Globally, more than 20,000 participate in the Cornell Hotel Sustainability Benchmarking Index to rank their carbon, energy, and water efficiencies. The latest Cornell report, issued in 2021, shows an almost 10 percent reduction in overall carbon emissions from 2017 to 2019.

Reusing towels is still a good idea, but increasingly, the industry is aiming higher. Style meets substance in the Hilton Tapestry Collection’s new **Hotel Marcel** in New Haven, Connecticut, a repurposed brutalist Marcel Breuer landmark that uses solar power throughout the building, down to the laundry room and the restaurant that serves locally sourced dishes. Plus, guests with electric vehicles can park at one of 24 charging stations.

When **Six Senses Svart** opens in Norway next year, travelers checking in to the futuristic hotel will learn it was built on stilts above the Holandsfjorden to minimize impact on the land and seabed. The property aims to capture enough energy from solar power and geothermal wells to cover daily operations and return excess energy to the grid. **Populus**, opening in Denver next year, will generate “carbon-positive” emissions (meaning it will offset more carbon than it emits) while gaining efficiency through architect Jeanne Gang’s aspen tree–inspired perforated exterior, which shades the interior.

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Bigger hotel brands are also championing sustainability: IHG's boutique brand **Voco** uses recycled materials in its duvets and pillows. Its Kirkton Park, Australia, location has an on-site garden that provides fruits, vegetables, and herbs for its restaurants and bars. Moving the needle at scale, **Marriott International** aims to have every hotel in its portfolio earn a recognized sustainability certification by 2025; soon, travelers will be able to search its website for sustainable hotels, including the **JW Marriott Washington, DC**, which recycles 100 percent of waste cooking oil for biofuel.

> Across the board, hotels are eager to meet the needs of those longer-term visitors who want to be productive and also explore a new destination.

More ideas are on the way. "Hotels have a reputation for being wasteful," says Ron Swidler, chief innovation officer of the Gettys Group Companies, a Chicago-based hospitality consulting firm. He founded the Hotel of Tomorrow Project so that participants (more than 300 industry leaders globally) could discuss emerging technologies, such as energy-saving modular construction, used by **citizenM** hotels to reduce waste and cut down on transportation emissions.

Meanwhile, the World Travel & Tourism Council and the Global Sustainable Tourism Council have launched criteria to guide and verify properties' efforts. And travelers can start to make more responsible choices via Booking.com, Expedia, and other reservation sites: Hotels on these platforms can earn sustainability badges for criteria such as LED lighting and vegan menus, thanks to the not-for-profit Travalyst.

MIXING BUSINESS AND PLEASURE

Travelers who can work remotely are staying longer and demanding more than a bed and a shower. In a 2022 study by JobSage, a site that reviews employers, 67 percent of more than 1,000 U.S. workers polled said their work and leisure time have blended together in recent years. The number of self-described digital nomads has risen too, from 7.3 million in 2019 to 16.9 million in 2022, per a report by MBO Partners, a company that provides services for independent workers.

Across the board, hotels are eager to meet the needs of those longer-term visitors who want to be productive and also explore a new destination. Some spots are marrying sleek residential design to the efficiency of an office, like Denver's **Catbird Hotel**, where raised platform beds reveal pullout desks, and streamlined kitchenettes make work-stays easier. Others are baking the lifestyle into their DNA: **Selina** hotels target digital nomads with coworking spaces and local art and music experiences, while exclusive members' club/hotel **Soho House** has added chic coworking spots to its portfolio, and some **Hyatt** properties let travelers book a room as an office for the day.

IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU

Personalization is the buzzword driving hotel tech these days. Chatbots are already routing your texts for more towels to the appropriate department. The next wave—expected by 2025, according to the tech company Oracle Hospitality—will be predictive analytics that book your Uber when you land and remember how (and when) you like your coffee.

Many hotels already seem to be living in the future. Smart rooms at the **Lake Nona Wave Hotel** in Orlando, Florida, use predictive intelligence to tint windows, while beds in its sleep-enhancing "Well+ech" rooms have sensors to track your sleep stages and control temperature.

Other conveniences put control in the hands of travelers. Using **Marriott's** Bonvoy app, guests can schedule deliveries anywhere on the property—say, Micheladas and club sandwiches by the pool.

"In one sense, the hotels of the future will be like hotels of the past, way past: intimate, personalized, and welcoming," says Chekitan Dev, a distinguished professor in Cornell University's hotel school. "In another sense, everything in the hotel will be different: better, smarter, and faster, enabled by technology."

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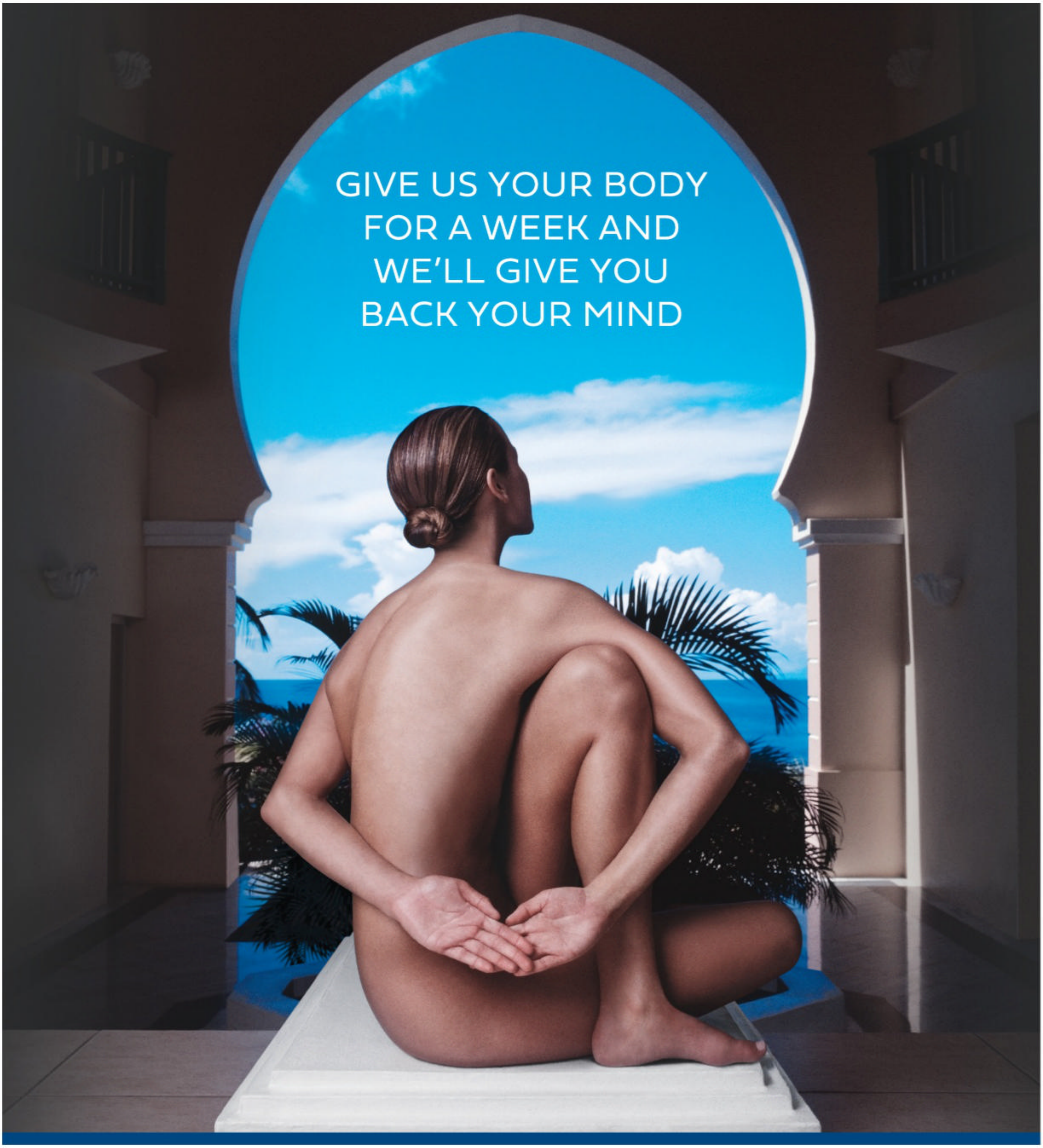
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The 2023

THE
BEST NEW HOTELS
IN THE WORLD

by
JENNIFER FLOWERS

Stay List

ICON: SHEKAR MENON

Every day at AFAR, we think deeply about what makes a hotel experience truly extraordinary. The hotels we love don't just wow us with their outstanding locations, design, and service. They're continually looking to reduce their carbon footprint, benefit communities in meaningful ways, and connect guests to biodiverse landscapes. We showcase these values each year on our Stay List, AFAR's compendium of the world's best new hotels. The 15 properties featured in the following pages—vetted by our trusted network of editors, writers, and travel advisors—range from an idyllic farm retreat in upstate New York to a palatial, locally run hotel on Italy's Lake Como. With choices like these, which will you book first? —**JENNIFER FLOWERS**

COURTESY ANDBEYOND

Tanzania

andBEYOND GRUMETI

SERENGETI NATIONAL PARK

The andBeyond Grumeti Serengeti River Lodge reemerged in 2022 after a stem-to-stern renovation and a mindful rethink: Its 10 rebuilt canvas-walled rooms feature sustainably sourced local hardwood and regional *kitenge* fabrics, and the property now runs on 80 percent renewable energy. It sits by a seasonal hippo pool where lions frequently come to drink and is near a major river crossing for the Great Migration of wildebeests. But viewing wildlife from a safari vehicle isn't the only activity—staff-led experiences bring guests deeper into nature in unexpected ways. That might mean spotting elephants on a walking safari with head ranger Nadhir Waziri or visiting fishing communities on nearby Lake Victoria to understand the local economy. Whatever you choose, it's just a short drive away. *From $1,135/night. —Jennifer Flowers*

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Canada

KLAHOOSE WILDERNESS RESORT

BRITISH COLUMBIA

One luxury of this wilderness retreat owned by the Klahoose First Nation is its location. Accessed via a 60-minute seaplane ride from Vancouver or 45-minute boat transfer from Lund, B.C., the resort is surrounded by more than 2,500 acres of Klahoose territory that the community has protected for centuries. Here, glacial waterfalls plummet down snowcapped mountains and evergreens border the Homfray Channel. The four lodge rooms and three cedar cabins all face the sea, where guests might glimpse humpbacks blowing at sunrise. Activities include Indigenous-led grizzly bear tours, wood-carving lessons from Klahoose interpreter Klemkwateki Randy Louie, and—perhaps the most meaningful experience—a participatory smudging and brushing ceremony around a fire. *From $1,855/person (three nights, all-inclusive based on double occupancy). —Kathryn Romeyn*

COULIBRI RIDGE

PETIT COULIBRI

Coulibri Ridge sets a new sustainability standard for the less-visited Caribbean isle of Dominica. The 14-suite off-the-grid hotel, situated on the southern tip of the island, uses solar panels and wind turbines for electricity, and pure rainwater is harvested and filtered on site. (Visitors can learn more on a tour around the property.) Nearby Martinique is visible from the rooms, which include full kitchens, terraces, and recyclable or renewable materials in their decor, such as hand-chiseled stone on the walls and recycled teakwood light fixtures. The 285-acre resort offers endless ways to commune with nature, whether by stargazing from chlorine-free infinity pools or enjoying yoga in the open-air pavilion surrounded by tropical plants. *From $700/night. —Kristin Braswell*

Dominica

COURTESY DESTINATION CANADA; COURTESY COULIBRI RIDGE

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New Zealand

FLOCKHILL

CANTERBURY

Among the pastures and dramatic peaks of New Zealand's Southern Alps lies Flockhill, a unique homestead that's also a gateway to one of the country's most secluded landscapes. A 90-minute drive from Christchurch, the four-bedroom property is set on a 36,000-acre, high-country sheep station. The limestone floors are juxtaposed with welcoming plush sofas from Kiwi designer Simon James, tables made from native trees, and, in a nod to the surroundings, sheepskins and lambswool throws. New Zealand–born chef Craig Martin emphasizes local ingredients in his meals: Périgord black truffles foraged in Canterbury one night, followed by fresh-caught hapuku from Rakiura the next. Even with these luxuries, the retreat's best asset is its access to adventures. Guides can take guests snowboarding at the nearby Broken River and Craigieburn ski areas or fly-fishing in Winding Stream. *From $5,811/night, two-night minimum. —Jessica Beresford*

BARRY TOBIN

Beyond the bustling energy of Atlanta and the charm of Savannah lies an unexpected Georgia ready to be uncovered. Among its many coastal barrier islands is Cumberland Island, where you can discover wild, maritime forests, and the mystery of the Dungeness Ruins – an old Carnegie family mansion now taken over by vibrant flora and fauna.

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RAFFLES UDAIPUR

RAJASTHAN

Udaipur has plenty of palatial stays, but the Raffles Udaipur captures the opulence of this historic kingdom, while giving guests an opportunity to fully unwind. A visit begins with a zero-emission boat ride to the property, located on a private island in the middle of Udai Sagar Lake. Grand architecture and interiors welcome guests, with details including 16-foot-tall hand-painted murals, manicured gardens that are home to 30 bird species, and a lavish spa. The 101 spacious lake-view rooms feature marble-inlay cupboards and intricate woodwork. Pay close attention to the menu at Sawai Kitchen, where dishes including *masaledaar bharwan kachhe tamatar* (green tomato in Rajasthani spices) and *dhungaar murgh* (country chicken cooked with whole spices) are a lesson on regional heirloom recipes. *From $540/night. —Sarika Bansal*

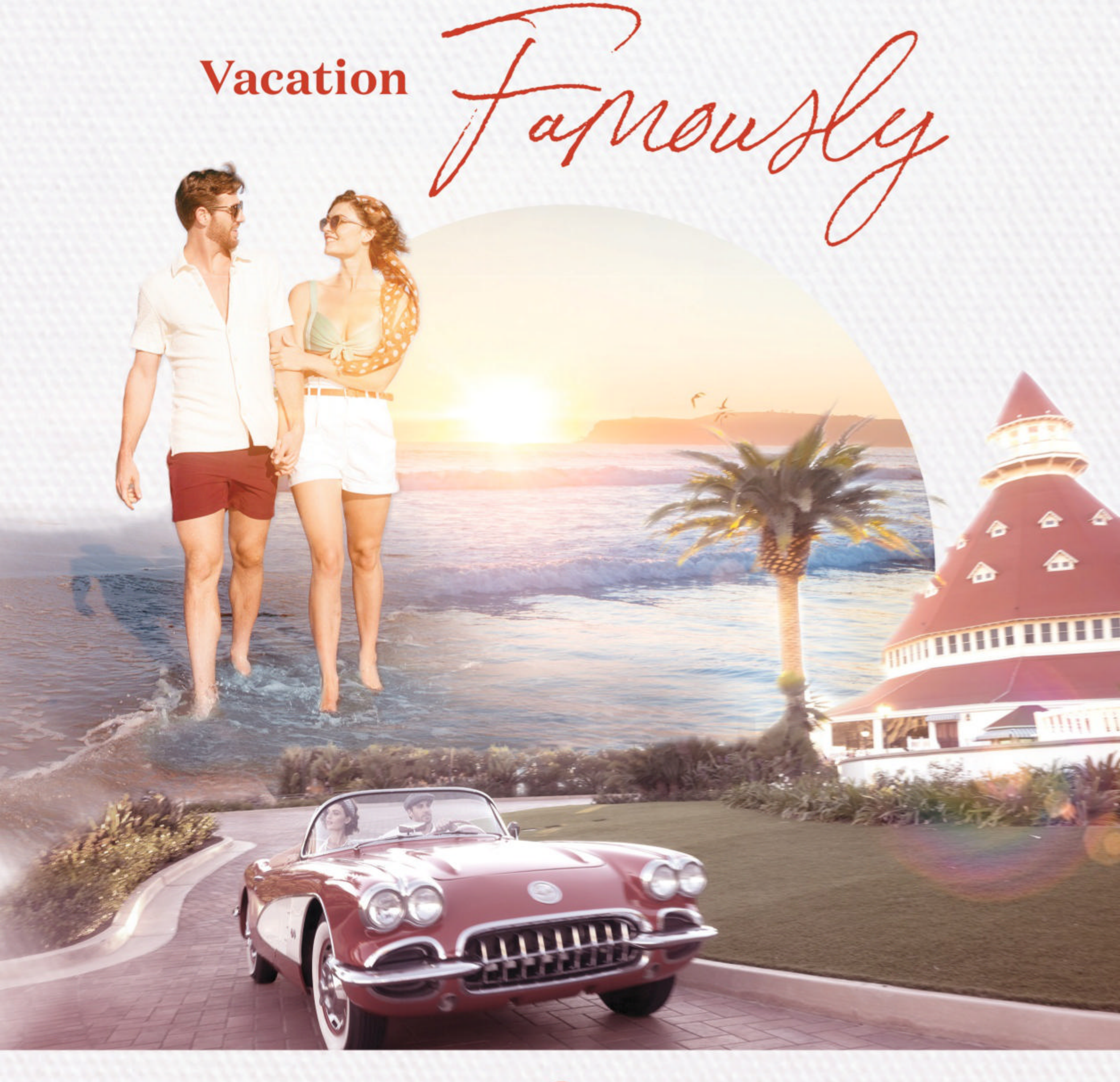
Canada

MUIR HOTEL

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA

While modern Halifax has grown beyond its nautical roots, the 109-room waterfront Muir—a member of Marriott's Autograph Collection of independent hotels and part of the city's new $200 million Queen's Marque district—offers a peek into its maritime past. In the lobby, walls of glass from an art installation glow like a lighthouse, and more works continue the theme throughout. Rooms are outfitted with midcentury modern–inspired furniture and custom-designed tartan blankets that nod to the province's Scottish history. The restaurant serves Nova Scotia classics such as hodge podge, a hearty stew, and the hotel's speakeasy BKS references the region's rum-running past in cocktails like Her Majesty's Displeasure. *From $297/night. —Aislyn Greene*

COURTESY RAFFLES UDAIPUR, ANSHUMAN SEN; NICOLE LAPIERRE



HOTEL DEL
CORONADO

Surround yourself with sun, sea, and timeless elegance at Hotel del Coronado, where beachside villas and private cottages set the stage for magical family memories. HotelDel.com

VILLA PASSALACQUA

LAKE COMO

Italy

Napoleon Bonaparte, Winston Churchill, and Italian composer Vincenzo Bellini were all guests at Lake Como's neoclassical Villa Passalacqua long before it was reborn as this exquisite 24-suite hotel. Owner Valentina De Santis—whose family has run the region's Grand Hotel Tremezzo for 49 years—reimagined the terraced estate for the 21st century down to the slightest detail, from custom Bottega Conticelli steamer trunks in the guest rooms to the curated antique oil paintings adorning the hallways. Have breakfast at noon overlooking the 18th-century gardens, laze away an entire day by the pool under a colorful parasol designed by Milan's J.J. Martin, or cozy up in a velvet chair in the wood-clad library with a book and a spritz. *From $858/night. —Jackie Caradonio*

STEFAN GIFTTHALER

NAYARA BOCAS DEL TORO

FRANGIPANI ISLAND, BOCAS DEL TORO

Nayara Bocas del Toro makes a stunning impression: 16 overwater bungalows and two tree houses all hovering above a turquoise-blue sea on a deep-green private island in a Central American location that you might not expect—Panama. But the more impressive story is behind the scenes: The resort is 100 percent rainwater supplied and mostly runs on solar energy. There's even a beach built on stilts to safeguard the flora and fauna, where you can sip rosé from a chaise or descend the steps to float in the warm protected waters. For more active endeavors, guests can kayak to spy starfish among the isle's mangroves, zoom to the bay with a private captain to watch dolphins play at sunset, and swim with bioluminescent plankton at night. *From $900/night (all-inclusive, per room based on two people sharing). —Billie Cohen*

Panama

COURTESY NAYARA RESORTS; KLEINJAN GROENEWALD

HABITAS ALULA

ASHAR VALLEY

No matter the hour, when you arrive at Habitas AlUla, a desert retreat in the Ashar Valley of northwest Saudi Arabia, a welcome ceremony commences. "We are brothers and sisters now," a staff member will tell you. "Welcome home." Here, "home" is one of 96 villas nestled in a canyon of rust-red sandstone cliffs. Each room uses organic materials—bamboo, canvas, and responsibly sourced hardwood—that blend into their surroundings. "Celestial" villas each have their own telescope, evoking the Bedouin experience of stargazing in the Arabian desert. But the real draw is the surrounding area's deep cultural history: Tours are available to AlUla's tombs, ancient marketplaces, and archaeological sites, including Hegra, parts of which date to the 1st century B.C.E. *From $400/night. —Laura Dannen Redman*

Saudi Arabia

INTERCONTINENTAL KHAO YAI RESORT

PAK CHONG, NAKHON RATCHASIMA

This new hotel offers another compelling reason to explore the area around biodiverse Khao Yai, Thailand's oldest and third-largest national park located three hours north of Bangkok by car. In a lake-dotted patch of former farmland where guests can spot hornbills and giant fig trees, the InterContinental Khao Yai's 45 rooms are spread over three buildings. Renowned designer Bill Bensley took inspiration from the nearby 19th-century Pak Chong railway station, decorating each accommodation with wall-mounted luggage racks and clerestory ceilings to mimic train cabins. But the resort's French restaurant, spa, and 19 villas and suites (five with private pools) deliver the upcycling masterstroke: Each one is set in a meticulously renovated railway car salvaged from junkyards across the country. *From $250/night.*
—*Chris Schalkx*

Thailand

HOTEL CHELSEA

NEW YORK CITY

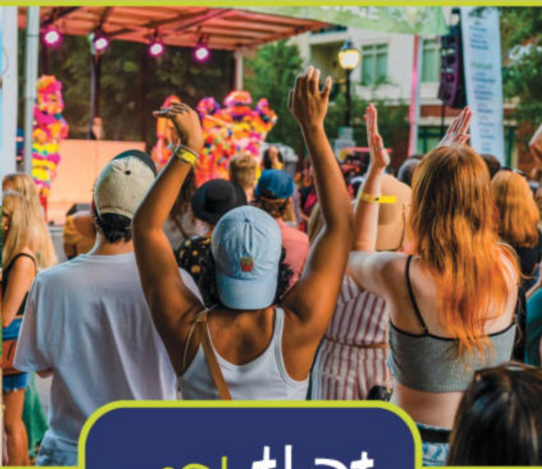
The Hotel Chelsea has always been more than a place to sleep. Before it shuttered in 2011, it had played host to some of New York City's most colorful guests and residents for decades—many of them cultural icons. Within these storied walls, Andy Warhol filmed *Chelsea Girls*, Dylan Thomas penned poetry, and Sex Pistols bassist Sid Vicious allegedly stabbed his girlfriend Nancy Spungen. Now, hoteliers Sean MacPherson, Ira Drukier, and Richard Born have launched a new chapter for this 139-year-old institution. In the 155 guest rooms, cheeky details tie past to present: Digital keys hang from red-tassel fobs, automated curtains are speckled with punk-rock holes, and tiger-print chairs pop next to regally fringed sofas. (You also might end up with one of the hotel's decades-long tenants as your neighbor; their apartment doors stand out with bright paint or stickers.) Downstairs, the Lobby Bar is a throwback to the city's Gilded Age, with classic cocktails inspired by other celebrated hotels of the world, such as the Singapore sling and Dukes martini. *From $345/night.*
—*Billie Cohen*

USA

COURTESY IHG HOTELS & RESORTS; JOE THOMAS

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE IN GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA

AURO BRIDGE



Greenville, SC is a welcoming retreat for explorers of every type. Tour the eclectic food scene, traverse the great outdoors and discover the arts community during your visit.

visitgreenvillesc.com | DISCOVER South Carolina

yeah, that greenville
SOUTH CAROLINA

Norway

SOMMERRO

OSLO

The 1930s headquarters of Oslo's electric company has been sustainably revamped to serve the city in a different way: Sommerro is not only a 231-room hotel with neoclassical and art deco trimmings but also an urban social hub where locals and travelers mingle. They can chat over a raspberry and elderflower cocktail or a reindeer udon noodle bowl at TAK (the hotel's Nordic Japanese fusion restaurant) or visit the building's public cinema, theater, and rooftop pool (Oslo's first). Afterward, when Oslovians head home, hotel guests can unwind in one of Sommerro's lofts and suites, designed with rich woods and jewel-toned accents. *From $250/night. —Amanda Ogle*

Portugal

PA.TE.OS

MELIDES, ALENTEJO

Designed by the Lisbon-born architecture star Manuel Aires Mateus, Pa.te.os's four brutalist concrete houses seamlessly invite the surrounding oak grove in: Giant glass doors disappear at the touch of a button and *pateos* (Portuguese for "patios") are filled with plants to deflect the winds coming in off the Atlantic. Inside, skylights in the bathrooms allow for starlit bathing, and rooms are furnished in a Scandinavian-inspired style (think light woods and pale linens) to help you focus on what's outside. One house has a well-equipped kitchen, where a private chef can prepare Alentejo-inspired feasts, including fresh-caught fish with couscous. *From $480/night. —Lisa Grainger*

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EXPLORE A DIFFERENT SIDE OF LIFE AT THE BEACH

There's a place for everyone under the sun to be their true self in Myrtle Beach.

BEYOND THE JOYS OF FROLICKING AT THE BEACH— you have more than 60 miles of picturesque sandy shores to do so here—Myrtle Beach's activities, cultural attractions, and charming neighborhoods delight visitors and help them feel at ease. Come as you are to this unpretentious hub of modern Southern hospitality that invites everyone to live their best lives at **The Beach**, as the area's affectionately called. Here are a few great reasons to hit what's also known as the "Grand Strand."

THE ULTIMATE SPOT FOR SPORTS LOVERS

Whether on land or sea, there's an active outing for every level, from beach walks to water sports and golf. Enjoy classics like volleyball and Frisbee or get out into the waves to surf and paddleboard. On solid ground, stroll through **Brookgreen Gardens**, **Conway Riverwalk**, and the **Murrells Inlet MarshWalk**. Or take a seat—spectator sports are big here too in the home of Minor League Baseball's Myrtle Beach Pelicans and the new **John T. Rhodes Myrtle Beach Sports Center**.

DIG IN, CULINARY CONNOISSEURS

Choose among over 2,000 restaurants to satisfy every palate. Seafood lovers, head to **Murrells Inlet**, the "seafood capital of South Carolina." Or feast on a succulent steak from local favorites such as **Sea Captain's House** or **Aspen Grille**. Casual, family-friendly spots abound, as do fine dining options like **The Cypress Room** and nationally recognized, award-winning restaurants including **Bistro 90**, **Chuck's Steak House**, and **Greg Norman Australian Grille**.

WHERE EVERYONE IS WELCOME

You'll find year-round temperate climates, spectacular beaches, and sunny skies, but locals' friendly ways are the real draw. Myrtle Beach also has the distinction of being the first location designated as autism-friendly by the **Champion Autism Network**. No wonder the area is considered the jewel of South Carolina—its inclusive spirit extends to all who visit The Beach.

START PLANNING YOUR TRIP AT VISITMYRTLEBEACH.COM

TEE TIME!

A GOLFER'S PARADISE, FOR ADULTS, KIDS, AND KIDS AT HEART

There are more than a few good reasons the International Association of Golf Travel Operators recently ranked South Carolina one of the **top five golf destinations in the world**. It was the only U.S. place to make the list, thanks in no small part to all the reasons why golfers often call Myrtle Beach a golf capital:

1. Over **90 golf courses**, many designed by legends of the game
2. More than **30 miniature golf courses** throughout the seaside communities
3. Upwards of **2.4 million rounds** of golf were played in Myrtle Beach last year alone

YOU WERE MADE FOR The Beach.
60 MILES WHERE YOU BELONG
VISIT
Myrtle Beach
SOUTH CAROLINA
Scan for trip inspiration.

Plan your trip to The Beach at VisitMyrtleBeach.com

BUAHAN, A BANYAN TREE ESCAPE

BALI

In the thrumming jungle 40 minutes north of Ubud, Buahan is reshaping the high-end hotel experience into one without walls. Nature is the star attraction in this remote, crowd-free part of Bali, where guests stay in one of 16 open-air *bales*, or villas. Each room is encircled by flowing curtains (fear not—ample space between the bales ensures plenty of privacy), includes a private infinity pool and hammered-copper bathtub, and incorporates wood salvaged from boat jetties in the Kalimantan region of the island of Borneo. Guests can visit the property's waterfall, firefly nursery, and open-air spa, then end the day with a meal prepared by Bali-born chef Eka Sunarya using foraged ingredients and produce from the on-site farm and local growers. *From $1,000/night. —Kathryn Romeyn*

Indonesia

MUHAMMAD FADLI

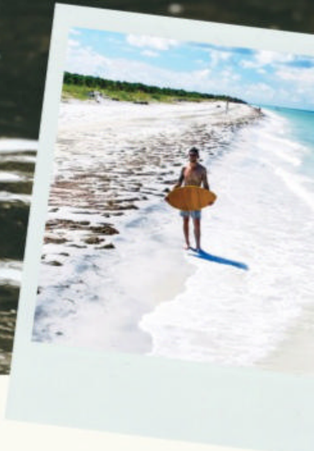
WILDFLOWER FARMS, AUBERGE RESORTS COLLECTION

HUDSON VALLEY, NEW YORK

Wildflower Farms is just a 90-minute drive north of Manhattan, but thanks to its location on a former tree farm below the Shawangunk Ridge, it feels worlds away. Guests staying in one of the 65 freestanding cottages decorated with local mementos (like custom-made quilts) have access to three miles of trails and a farm that provides seasonal vegetables—plus wildflowers in summer—to the on-site fine-dining restaurant, Clay. The Thistle spa offers facials and massages using local, hand-harvested oils and scrubs. But wellness here is more than just a spa treatment (or two). It's also a chance to connect with the rhythms of the environs around you, whether you're forest bathing down near the Shawangunk Kill or picking your own eggs from the chicken coop for breakfast each morning. *From $1,000/night. —Lyndsey Matthews*

USA

COURTESY AUBERGE RESORTS COLLECTION



Awe Awaits from Coast to Coast on These Florida Adventures

Revel in stunning natural scenery by land and water, see vibrant wildlife, experience cultural wonders, and enjoy culinary exploration in the Sunshine State.

Why These Pristine Beaches and Serene Coastal Locales Are Calling

South Walton's 16 unique neighborhoods pair scenic landscapes and cultural pleasures with toes-in-the-sand vibes.

The gorgeous Gulf-front neighborhoods of South Walton set amid picturesque coastal scenery are the makings of vacation dreams. Located in Northwest Florida, the destination boasts **26 miles of sugar-white beaches** for all types of sunny, sandy escapes, plus stylish accommodations, outdoor adventure, and local flavor.

Explore the area's stunning beauty that includes vibrant turquoise water, 15 coastal dune lakes (found only in a few places in the world), **Choctawhatchee Bay**, four state parks, and the 15,000-acre **Point Washington State Forest**. With nearly 40 percent of land preserved for

Beyond-the-Beach Adventures

South Walton is home to an abundance of beautiful beaches. Venture north of the **Choctawhatchee Bay** for even more thrills.

- Head to **DeFuniak Springs**' historic downtown district for eclectic boutiques, treasure-filled antique shops, and charming restaurants. Tour **Circle Drive** surrounding **Lake DeFuniak** to glimpse nearly 200 historic homes and buildings.
- Engage in hands-on conservation experiences at **E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center** located on the 54,000-acre Nokuse Plantation in **Freeport**.
- In **Paxton**, stroll **Lakewood Park**'s wooded trails, paddle a kayak on **Lake Jackson**, and dig into the town's early farming roots at **The Paxton Agricultural Center**.

nature, you'll enjoy easy access to more than 200 miles of hiking and biking trails. And more fresh-air activities beckon in every beach neighborhood, from tennis, championship golf, and kayaking to cycling, stand-up paddleboarding, and beachside yoga.

You can also delight in the blissful natural setting as you dig into the diverse culinary scene. Soak in South Walton's spectacular views among the upwards of **200 restaurants**. You'll discover casual beachside eats, rooftop eateries, and elegant beachfront dining. Savor fresh-from-the-Gulf cuisine thanks to celebrated chefs who tap locally sourced ingredients. For a private gastronomic experience, enjoy a one-of-a-kind meal prepared by one of Walton County's finest chefs as you take in mesmerizing vistas from the comfort of your porch or balcony.

It's all part of the distinctive character and relaxing atmosphere of this remarkable place. Plus, small businesses including boutiques, art galleries, and craft breweries make each neighborhood unique—and they're all within easy reach. Travel is a breeze by car or by plane with South Walton less than 25 miles from Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport and Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport.

Find your perfect beach at VisitSouthWalton.com

SOUTH WALTON

A LEGACY OF LEISURE

South Walton's 26 miles of sugar-white sand beaches in Northwest Florida offer an all-natural escape, yet perfectly blend modern amenities, world-class cuisine and small town charm into an unforgettable experience.

The days move a bit slower here, and it's this simplicity – a day spent creating memories at the beach – that draws generations of families back to South Walton.

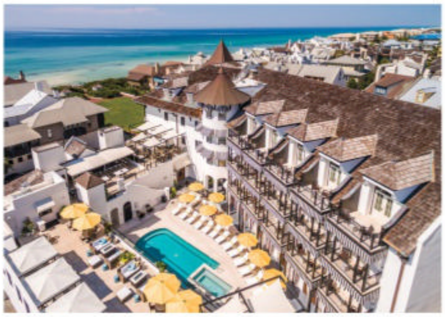
ROOMS WITH A VIEW

From resorts to boutique hotels, South Walton is home to unique architecture, breathtaking views and accommodations to suit any style.

Opening Summer 2023, the **Camp Creek Inn^{SM}** experience is one of laid-back luxury. Guests can enjoy the exclusive Watersound Club^{SM} lifestyle – including access to the area's private golf courses, beach club, and other amenities.

The LODGE 30A

Experience **The Lodge 30A** – South Walton's newest 30A boutique hotel at Seagrove's Greenway Station. Rooms include kitchenettes and guests have access to an outdoor pool, fitness center, as well as a private beach club and golf courses.



The Pearl Hotel brings luxury and sophistication to South Walton, featuring beautifully appointed accommodations, destination-worthy cuisine and a welcoming spa. Guests also enjoy complimentary beach chairs and oversized umbrellas.

CAMP CREEK INN^{SM}

CampCreekInn.com

THE LODGE^{30}A
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SOUTH WALTON
FLORIDA

MEMORIES IN THE MAKING

The experience of a great family trip resonates through generations, and the backdrop of our natural beauty inspires true togetherness. Find your perfect beach at VisitSouthWalton.com.

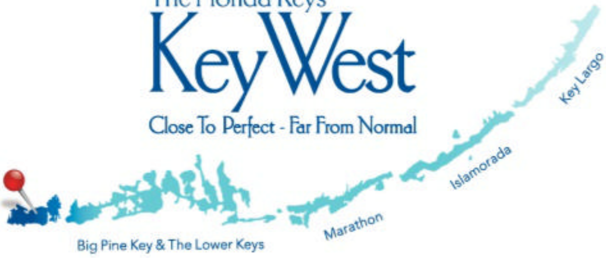
MIRAMAR BEACH · SEASCAPE · SANDESTIN · DUNE ALLEN · GULF PLACE · SANTA ROSA BEACH · BLUE MOUNTAIN BEACH
GRAYTON BEACH · WATERCOLOR · SEASIDE · SEAGROVE · WATERSOUND · SEACREST · ALYS BEACH · ROSEMARY BEACH · INLET BEACH

Last bastion for adventure.

Key West has always been protective of what can only be described as a remarkable way of life. But it's not just our gin-clear waters, world-class fishing and diving, kayaking, boating, art galleries and historical sites we're watching over. It's also an open-minded attitude where everyone's welcome.

fla-keys.com/keywest 1.800.527.8539

The Florida Keys
Key West
Close To Perfect - Far From Normal



Margaritaville Beach House Key West
Experience the best Key West lifestyle with casual oceanfront luxury, spacious rooms and suites, terrace dining, and a lagoon-style pool.
855-235-3914 or 305-292-9800
margaritavillebeachhousekeywest.com

Sunset Key Cottages
Situated on an exclusive 27-acre island off Key West, with a complimentary launch to luxurious 2-4 bedroom cottages.
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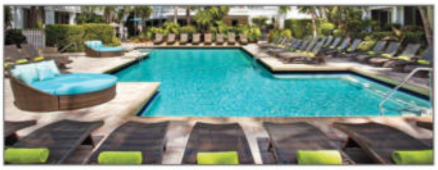
sunsetkeycottages.com



Opal Key Resort & Marina
Experience this extraordinary, vibrant waterfront resort in the heart of Old Town Key West.
855-366-8045 or 305-294-4000
opalkeywest.com

Discover Your Next Unforgettable Adventure in Key West

Florida's southernmost tropical paradise delivers outdoor thrills alongside history, cultural diversity, architecture, and fresh seafood.

When it comes to a vacation that satisfies your appetite for adventure in style, look no further than Key West. Perfectly situated between the **Gulf of Mexico** and the Atlantic, this historic island city provides an ocean of possibilities.

From **fishing expeditions, snorkeling trips, live music, and museums** to five-star resorts and cozy B&Bs, there's something for everyone here. And a truly sublime experience is eating seafood fresh off the boat.

It's all part of what's made Key West a beacon of inspiration for people from every walk of life for more than a century. This is a place where pirates, poets, artists, and entertainers of all genres live in complete harmony, and where visitors are welcomed as friends. **Come as you are** or reinvent yourself while you're here. Anything goes.

To start planning your next trip, call 1-800-527-8539 or visit Fla-Keys.com/KeyWest

A First-Timer's Guide to Key West

Fill your itinerary with some of the destination's most popular activities.

- For scuba divers, plan a day underwater to experience **The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary**, which boasts 20 species of coral and vast marine life.
- Take a stroll among free-flying butterflies and exotic birds at **The Key West Butterfly & Nature Conservatory**.
- Board a two-hour ferry to **Dry Tortugas National Park** and enjoy turquoise waters, fantastic snorkeling, and historical tours of **Fort Jefferson**.

LET'S MAKE IT
LOOK LIKE
WE'VE DONE
THIS BEFORE.

Glide through the emerald-green waters of the Gulf. Whether you're kayaking, kitesurfing, paddleboarding or snorkeling, there are endless ways of exploring, and enjoying, the outdoors. Let's shine—start your adventure at **VisitStPeteClearwater.com**

ST.PETE
CLEARWATER
FLORIDA

This Gulf Coast Paradise Is More Than Meets the Eye

Adventures in St. Pete/Clearwater include sugary white sand, flamingo-pink sunsets, and a thriving arts community.

With beaches consistently voted among the best in the United States, St. Pete/Clearwater makes for a fantastic seaside getaway. And beyond the **35 miles of shimmering coastline** with emerald waters, a growing arts community is giving the area a renewed sense of creativity, innovation, and inclusion.

The oasis-like destination welcomes everyone to discover its cultural side, whether through a day of surrealism at the **Dalí Museum** or fascinating history at **The James Museum of Western & Wildlife Art**. When it's time for nature's masterpieces, take a sunny stroll along the new St. Pete Pier, visit the world-famous sponge docks of Tarpon Springs, and paddle through lush mangrove forests at Fort De Soto.

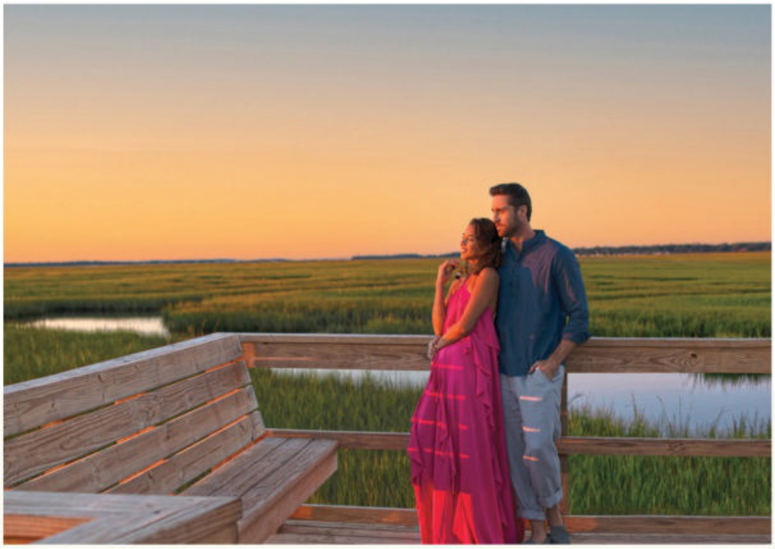
Answer St. Pete/Clearwater's call at VisitStPeteClearwater.com

DUNEDIN
The Trail

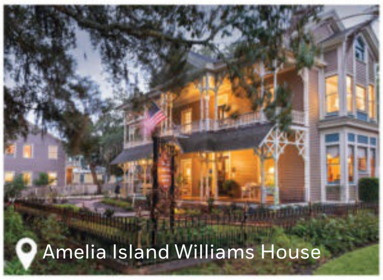
Hit the Hidden Delights

Soak in the small-town charm of downtown Dunedin, where you can dine on incredible tacos at the colorful **Casa Tina** restaurant, sip a cold one at **Dunedin Brewery**, and bike the **Pinellas Trail**. Get inspired at one of the classes or workshops held at the fabulous **Safety Harbor Museum & Cultural Center**. Explore the verdant, 120-acre **Florida Botanical Gardens** (for free!) in Largo. And don't miss June's monthlong **St. Pete Pride**—the biggest event of its kind in Florida, and one of the largest in the U.S.

AMELIA ISLAND
FLORIDA
It's an Island thing.
AmeliaIsland.com



The Addison on Amelia Island



Fairbanks House

This Island's Charm Pairs Perfectly with Its Natural Beauty

Tranquil Amelia Island in Northeast Florida offers memorable experiences year-round.

With 13 miles of **pristine, uncrowded beaches** in the east and salt-marsh estuaries in the west, Amelia Island enchants travelers with outdoor adventures and serene landscapes, as well as culture. Winding nature trails provide ample walking, biking, birding, and kayaking opportunities. Stunning fairways deliver **99 holes of championship golf**, and you can perfect your short game on a new short course.

This island oasis embraces its sunny climate with alfresco dining, live music, and waterfront eateries available in every season. Stroll historic downtown **Fernandina Beach** for restaurants, shops, galleries, bars, and breweries in a walkable neighborhood.

Plus, whether you're a food-first traveler, music lover, runner, or automotive afficionado, Amelia Island's charismatic seaport character and temperate climate make a delightful backdrop for a year-round slate of events worth planning a trip around.

See how you can escape the everyday at AmeliaIsland.com

Discover True Southern Hospitality

Stay in fabled Victorian inns, full of restored old-world details and modern amenities, within walking distance of downtown Fernandina Beach's 50-block historic district.

- Enjoy the spacious rooms of **Fairbanks House**, an Italianate-style villa graced with bay windows, balconies, and quiet porches.
- **The Addison** channels Old Florida elegance with antebellum-style buildings enclosing the lushly landscaped courtyard and three-tier fountain.
- A Florida Heritage Site, the **Williams House** is housed in an exquisite 1856 building tied to the Underground Railroad, with two-story verandas overlooking heirloom flower gardens.
- **Hoyt House** blends romance, comfort—and a pool—to serve as your home away from home.

Book now at AmeliaIsland.com/BBOffers

Welcome
EVERYONE UNDER THE SUN

Enjoy Greater Fort Lauderdale's world-class beaches, dining, and attractions before or after you sail on Celebrity Cruises' breathtaking Edge® Series ships. Their Relaxed Luxury℠ resorts at sea offer award-winning escapes to the Caribbean's most incredible destinations. There's no better island getaway than a Celebrity cruise, and there's no better place to sail from than Port Everglades.

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EVERYONE UNDER THE SUN

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To book your cruise, call 1-800-CELEBRITY, contact your travel advisor, or visit Celebrity.com

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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH VISIT FLORIDA

Choose Your Own Pleasure in This Fabulous Beach Destination in Florida

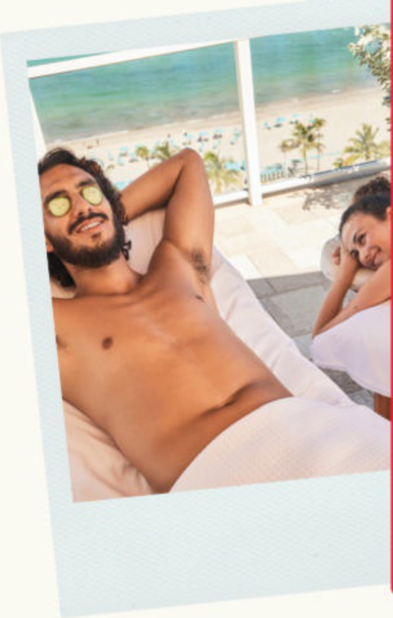
Known as the world's yachting capital, Greater Fort Lauderdale bursts with tropical beauty, plus restaurants, shopping, and attractions.

Adventure comes in all flavors in Greater Fort Lauderdale, from **24 miles of golden beaches** to more than 4,000 restaurants and hundreds of top-notch accommodations.

In this shimmering playground, charter a boat, join an eco-tour, and explore waterways by kayak, paddleboard or water taxi. View sea life on scuba diving and snorkeling excursions. Zip through **the Everglades'** natural wonders on an airboat ride.

For world-class dining experiences, dig into a culinary scene led by award-winning chefs at lively cafés along **Las Olas Boulevard and beyond**—stylish rooftop bars, dock-and-dine eateries like **15th Street Fisheries**, and beachside hot spots. Kick back at celebrated hotels and resorts with spa treatments and private poolside cabanas.

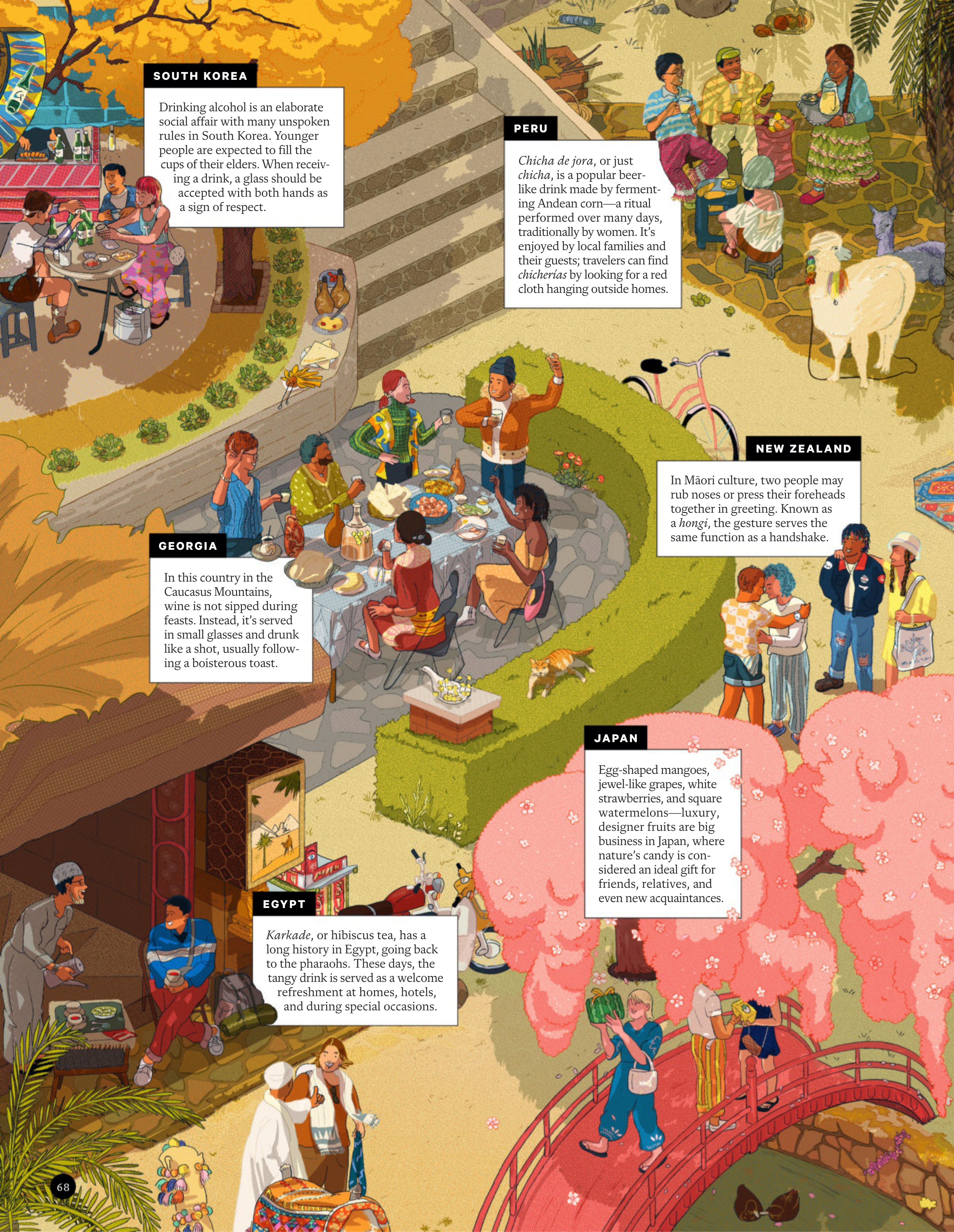
Do adventure your way at VisitLauderdale.com



A Perfect Day in Greater Fort Lauderdale

Stroll along the **Hollywood Beach Broadwalk**, popping into beachfront shops and eateries. Climb the historic lighthouse at **Hillsboro Beach** for sweeping views of the Atlantic. Fish off of **Dania Beach Pier** and catch the sunset. Or head to **Shipwreck Park** near the shores of Pompano Beach for snorkeling in paradise.

Top it all off with a delicious meal followed by entertainment. For an elegant experience, savor fresh seafood at **3030 Ocean Restaurant**, a bistro overlooking the ocean. See the mermaid show at the **Wreck Bar** and toast to your adventure.



SOUTH KOREA

Drinking alcohol is an elaborate social affair with many unspoken rules in South Korea. Younger people are expected to fill the cups of their elders. When receiving a drink, a glass should be accepted with both hands as a sign of respect.

PERU

Chicha de jora, or just *chicha*, is a popular beer-like drink made by fermenting Andean corn—a ritual performed over many days, traditionally by women. It's enjoyed by local families and their guests; travelers can find *chicherías* by looking for a red cloth hanging outside homes.

NEW ZEALAND

In Māori culture, two people may rub noses or press their foreheads together in greeting. Known as a *hongi*, the gesture serves the same function as a handshake.

GEORGIA

In this country in the Caucasus Mountains, wine is not sipped during feasts. Instead, it's served in small glasses and drunk like a shot, usually following a boisterous toast.

JAPAN

Egg-shaped mangoes, jewel-like grapes, white strawberries, and square watermelons—luxury, designer fruits are big business in Japan, where nature's candy is considered an ideal gift for friends, relatives, and even new acquaintances.

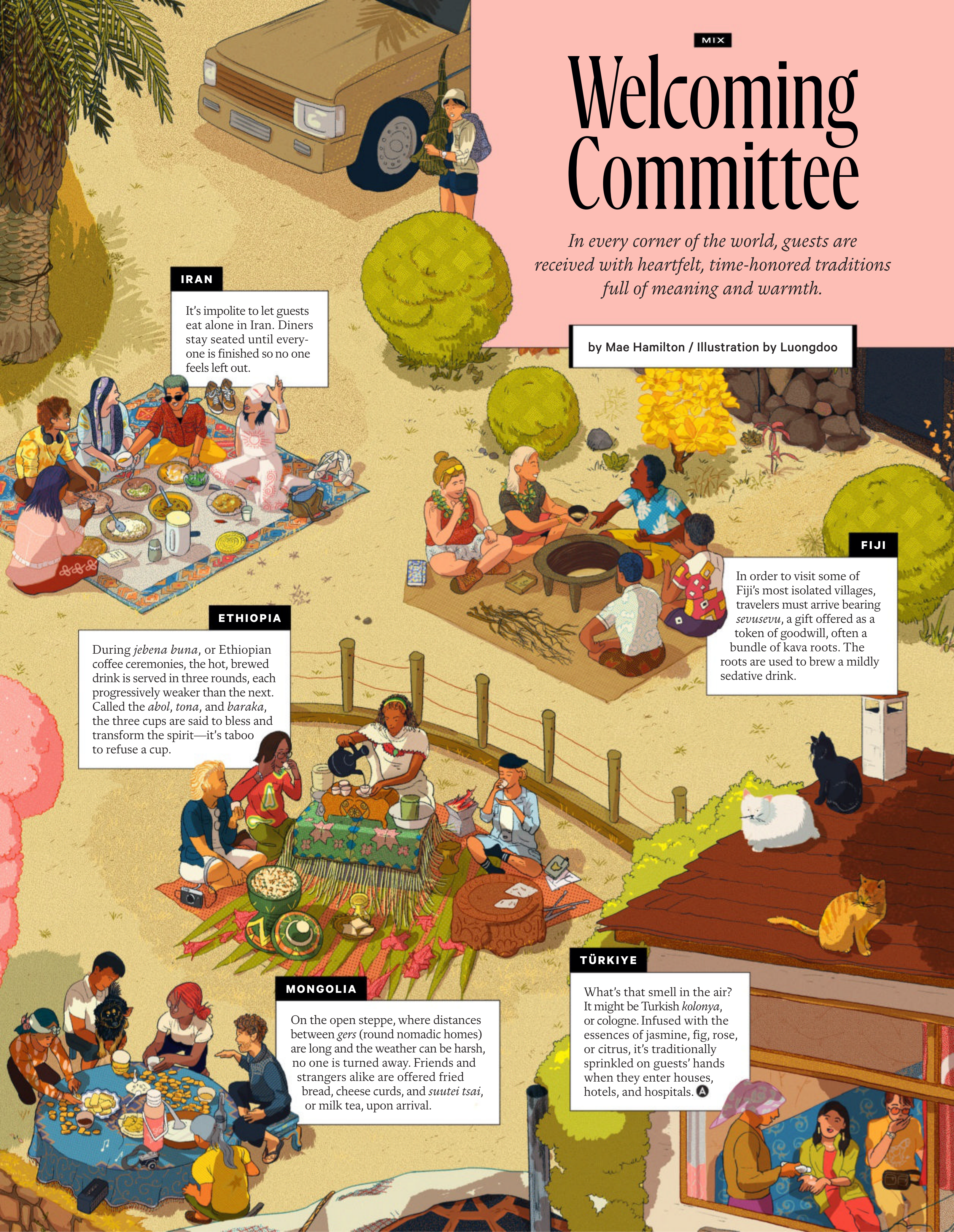
EGYPT

Karkade, or hibiscus tea, has a long history in Egypt, going back to the pharaohs. These days, the tangy drink is served as a welcome refreshment at homes, hotels, and during special occasions.

Welcoming Committee

In every corner of the world, guests are received with heartfelt, time-honored traditions full of meaning and warmth.

by Mae Hamilton / Illustration by Luongdoo



IRAN

It's impolite to let guests eat alone in Iran. Diners stay seated until everyone is finished so no one feels left out.

FIJI

In order to visit some of Fiji's most isolated villages, travelers must arrive bearing *sevusevu*, a gift offered as a token of goodwill, often a bundle of kava roots. The roots are used to brew a mildly sedative drink.

ETHIOPIA

During *jebena buna*, or Ethiopian coffee ceremonies, the hot, brewed drink is served in three rounds, each progressively weaker than the next. Called the *abol*, *tona*, and *baraka*, the three cups are said to bless and transform the spirit—it's taboo to refuse a cup.

MONGOLIA

On the open steppe, where distances between *gers* (round nomadic homes) are long and the weather can be harsh, no one is turned away. Friends and strangers alike are offered fried bread, cheese curds, and *suutei tsai*, or milk tea, upon arrival.

TÜRKIYE

What's that smell in the air? It might be Turkish *kolonya*, or cologne. Infused with the essences of jasmine, fig, rose, or citrus, it's traditionally sprinkled on guests' hands when they enter houses, hotels, and hospitals. Ⓐ

A SPECIAL NOTE FROM AFAR

“This trip is important to me because I’ve never been out of the country before.”

—Brandon, who will travel to Ghana with Learning AFAR

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Liquid Gold

Tunisia is the world's third-largest olive oil exporter, but a history of selling in bulk has favored quantity over quality. Today, a group of artisan producers is pressing for change.

by Lindsey Tramuta

Photographs by Ilyes Griyeb

This page, from top: Sarah Ben Romdane's family owns five olive estates; the women farmworkers, such as Zohra (above), traditionally sing and dance during the harvest.

Opposite page: Olives are harvested by hand, using ladders to reach the highest branches.

AT THE BEGINNING of November, as olives begin their transformation from green to purple, Sarah Ben Romdane's team of nearly 50 women farmworkers sets off. Under a golden sky in Bou Thadi, Tunisia, they split into groups and work tree by tree, which are spaced at least 50 feet apart—the same distance the Romans first planted their olive trees centuries ago. They loosen the olives from each branch using small hand rakes, allowing them to drop gently onto large nets spread out on the ground.

The women sing one of several century-old songs while they work. "I have a garden of black olives, beautiful ladies come to harvest it," the lyrics go. The singing slows as they collect the olives and bring them to the mill for cold-pressing to lock in quality and flavor.

"Most people assume the world's olive oil comes from Italy, Spain, or Greece, and that's it. They have no idea that Tunisia is the world's third-largest exporter and the first outside of the E.U.," says Ben Romdane, a 29-year-old entrepreneur who splits her time between Paris and the coastal Tunisian town of Mahdia, about 60 miles northeast of Bou Thadi. "In fact, they really don't know much about Tunisia at all."

Imagine you're scanning the shelves in your local market for a new bottle of olive oil. The labels might lead you to believe the oil is 100 percent Italian, but inspect the fine print and a fuller picture emerges: Pressed in Italy, Produced Outside of the European Union. And that's if the bottles specify that distinction at all.

Ben Romdane, who distributes Kaïa, her own brand of organic extra virgin olive oil—made from heirloom olives handpicked on her family's fifth-generation estate—is part of a growing movement to champion premium, artisanally made Tunisian oils. With one foot in Tunisia and the other in Europe, Ben Romdane has become a de facto ambassador for this evolution.

> “I want to show that small producers can build an alternative system that values the quality of the olives and respects the people who work with us and protect our land,” Ben Romdane says.

Countries in North Africa have grown olive trees and produced olive products for millennia. Researchers found that the Phoenicians began cultivating the olive tree and spreading it across the Mediterranean through trade around the 10th century B.C.E., producing oil in Tunisia shortly thereafter. The country’s sun-drenched, semi-arid land made for optimal conditions to grow olive trees, enabling the development of a global business. As a result, olive groves cover about one-third of Tunisia’s landmass, and olive oil represents nearly half its agricultural exports.

Like wine merchants who buy grapes or finished wines from other producers and bottle them under their own name, the global olive oil business has traded heavily in bulk olives, relying on low-cost production in countries such as Tunisia. “Quality wasn’t emphasized for a long time,” explains Sonda Laroussi, an engineer, olive oil consultant, and professional taster based in Sfax, Tunisia. “It takes better machinery and skills to push and market a high-quality product with more aromatic complexity, all of which comes at a cost. If margins remain thin, the thinking is: Why bother?”

And yet, there is great character among Tunisian olives. The two most dominant varietals used for oil are Chetoui and Chemlali, which both contain high levels of antioxidant-rich polyphenols and yield distinctive flavor profiles. Chemlali, the heirloom variety that grows on Ben Romdane’s family estate, accounts for 70 percent of olives grown in the country, producing an oil

Above: A worker removes leaves from freshly picked olives.

Right: Workers take crates of olives to the mill for cold-pressing on the same day they’re picked.

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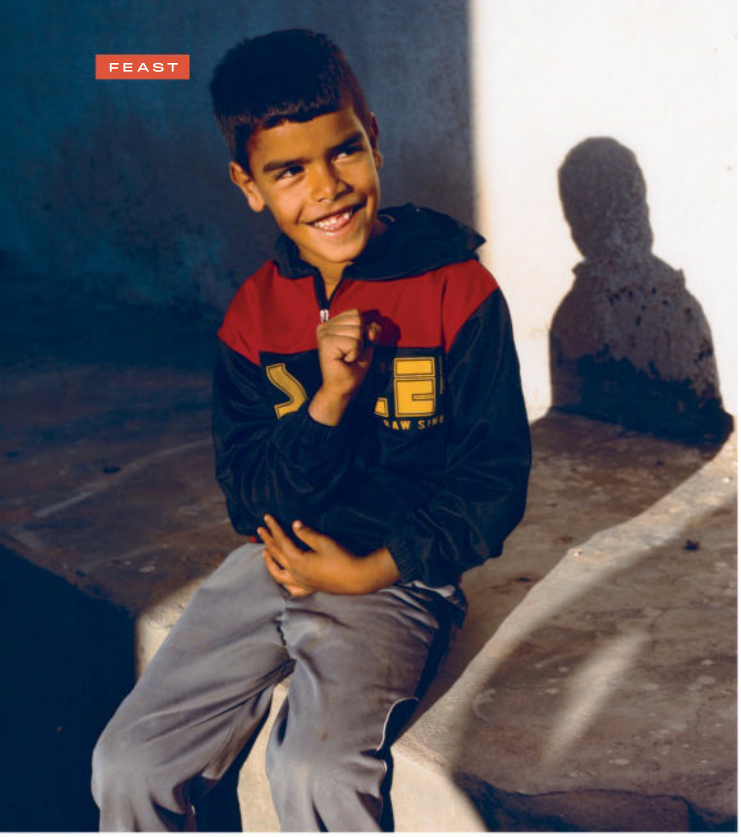

KAÏA
HUILE D'OLIVE
VIERGE EXTRA

that is smooth and versatile, low in acidity, and balanced with notes of almond and artichoke, leading to a peppery finish.

Part of Ben Romdane's motivation is to celebrate and promote awareness of the country's rich terroir. Born and raised in Paris to Syrian and Tunisian parents, she spent childhood summers in Mahdia, a short drive from three olive estates that the family can trace back five generations. Her third great-grandfather, Mohamed Romdane, became the first Tunisian to export local olive oil to the United States, where it won prizes. Subsequent generations carried on the business until the 1950s.

Ben Romdane left Paris and joined her parents in Mahdia in the summer of 2020, assuming she'd quickly return to her life as a culture journalist. Instead, she reconnected with her roots during a time of global turmoil and unlocked a new life perspective. With her family's blessing, she purchased olives from the estate in November 2020 and prepared to bottle and market the oil globally as Kaïa, a Product of Tunisia.

Her second batch drew the attention of specialty shops, such as La Grande Épicerie in Paris and Sabah in New York City. "We look for the trifecta: incredible product, beautiful packaging, and a backstory that will resonate," says Clémence Le Tannou, the buyer for La Grande Épicerie who added the brand, the first of the company's Tunisian olive oils, to its shelves. "Kaïa had it all, plus a character unlike the other oils we carry. And because Sarah was able to be in-store to lead tastings, our regulars instantly latched on."

In creating a direct supply chain where she oversees every stage of the process and offers higher compensation for workers, Ben Romdane hopes heirloom agriculture can serve as a form of cultural and political resistance: "The current trade system is part of a cycle that hurts the perception of 'Made in Tunisia.' I want to show that small producers can build an alternative system that values the quality of

Tunisia: Where to Go, What to Do, and Where to Stay

Many of Tunisia's culinary activities are found in and around Tunis, the country's capital and largest city. SaharanSky runs night food tours in Tunis (*starting at $90 per person*) and excursions to nearby wine estates (*starting at $125 per person*). The Four Seasons in Tunis, located along the beachfront in the Gammarth neighborhood, offers a palatial stay with contemporary touches.

For a visit that spans the country—including ancient ruins, *ksours* (fortified villages), Saharan salt flats, Amazigh (Berber) subterranean dwellings made famous by *Star Wars* films, Tunis's medina, and more—consider the 12-day cultural tour with Wild Frontiers (*starting at $3,784 per person*). It includes stays at elegant blue-accented whitewashed hotels such as Dar Saïd and glamping in the desert town of Douz.

Oleotourism (olive oil tourism) is on the rise, too. Some olive oil producers, such as the Domaine de Segermès, open their doors to visitors. And travel company Engaging Cultures runs bespoke Taste Tunisia tours, which incorporate olive harvesting, olive oil tastings, and cooking lessons into its 10-day experience (*starting at $2,499 per person*).

Top: A family affair: Naïm, the son of a farmworker, takes in the harvest.

Bottom: A finished tin of Kaïa olive oil, low in acidity and complex in flavor.

Right: Sarah Ben Romdane (second from right) sits with several of the women she employs.

the olives and respects the people who work with us and protect our land."

This vision isn't Ben Romdane's alone. Other Tunisian olive oil producers, including Slim Fendri of Domaine Fendri and Afet and Sélima Ben Hamouda, sisters who joined their family farm in 2015 to launch A&S extra virgin olive oil in 2017, have earned top honors at NYIOOC, the prestigious world olive oil competition. The positive impact of such attention can be felt swiftly, Afet says. "We all face strong competition from European producers with stronger infrastructure. But contests bring visibility, and consumers take notice." Spreading the good word about Tunisian olive oil beyond the competitions, she says, is a matter of time.

The country's ambitions have a shorter runway. In 2020, Tunisia exported 27,000 metric tons of bottled olive oil. The goal, according to the president of the Tunisian Chamber of Olive Oil Exporters, Chihab Ben Slama, is to export 70,000 metric tons by 2025.

With only 5.5 metric tons produced from her 2021 harvest, Ben Romdane remains a relatively small player. But her commitment is clear. "A nation is strong when it is aware of its culture and shines," she says. "This is my way of restoring that for our people." ●

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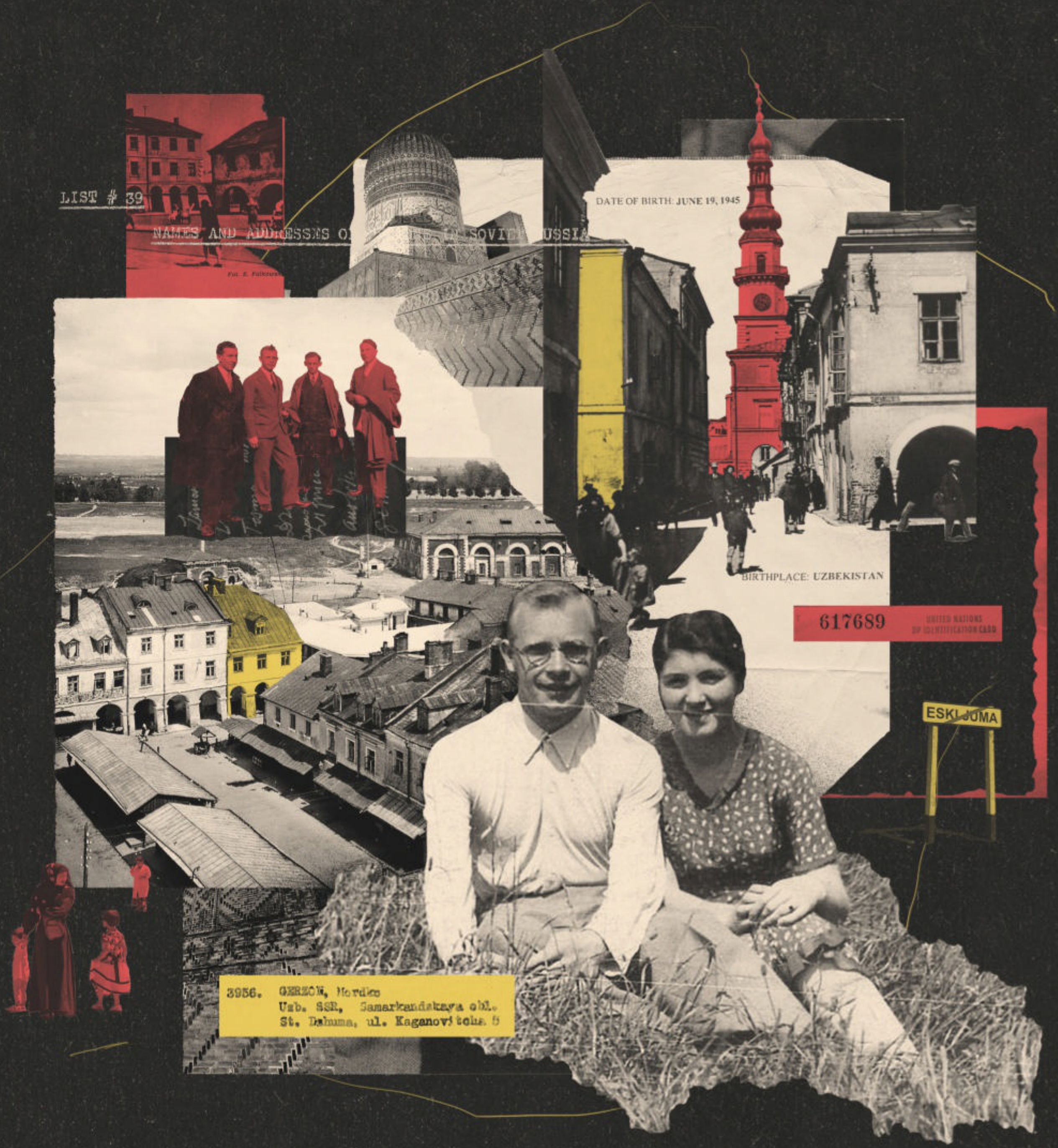
CONNECT

My Father's House

*Writer **Daniela Gerson** travels to Uzbekistan, and with a little help from strangers, discovers a family history she's been chasing for years.*

Illustrations by Israel Vargas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NAMES AND ADDRESSES O
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THE SAMARKAND GUESTHOUSE manager insists the breakfast room makes wishes come true. I consider sharing the quest that brought me from Los Angeles, but I'm dubious about his superstition. Instead, I focus on the spread—blinis, cherry compote, fried eggplant. The walls are a kaleidoscope of intricately carved and painted designs left over from the Jewish family who once lived here. Above the remnants of an altar is a benediction in Hebrew: MAY YOU BE BLESSED WHEN ENTERING AND BLESSED WHEN LEAVING.

I need such a blessing, for I am here—in Muslim Central Asia—with an elusive goal: to uncover traces of my Jewish family more than 75 years after they left and never returned. Unlike the Bukharan Jews who had lived in this ancient city for hundreds of years, my Polish Jewish family's connection to Uzbekistan was much briefer, more tenuous. They were among hundreds of thousands of Jews who found refuge in Uzbekistan during the Holocaust.

At the beginning of World War II, my grandparents fled east to Soviet-occupied territory. In June of 1940, Stalin deported them to Siberia and they suffered a year of forced labor in camps. When liberated, they chugged by train to Uzbekistan in the fall of 1941, seeking safety. Samarkand was too packed with refugees to absorb more. The authorities told them to continue 18 miles to the village of Juma, where they would remain for four years, eking out a livelihood on the black market. My father was born in the dusty village.

Seventy-six years later, I feel his presence as I wander Samarkand's alleyways and chance upon magnificent, azure-tiled mosques and mausoleums. In Uzbekistan, at the crossroads of the Middle East, Russia, and China, I imagine my father pausing, marveling at these structures that were familiar and different from what he had seen before—part of his origins and yet also completely new. But he is not with me.

I am eating alone in the breakfast room when a woman in black strides in. Anait, an Armenian Uzbek, introduces herself as my guide in this journey to trace my father's origins. I tell her that he'd always planned to return to his birthplace—but at warp speed, his mind stopped working two years ago, and then his body collapsed. Uzbekistan was a place written in his passport, obituaries, and death certificate. But it was a mystery to him. Tears slide from my eyes.

"You came here with your mission," Anait says. "You are fulfilling his wish." And then she tells me it's time to get to work.

I TRAVELED TO UZBEKISTAN alone, but friends joined me in Samarkand. I introduce Anait to Oleg and Lilia, academics who fled Russia at the start of the Ukraine war and so were labeled enemies of the state by Vladimir Putin. Like my grandparents, they see Uzbekistan as a way station, rather than a destination.

The four of us pack into a white micro taxi for Juma. I stare out the backseat window, cramped and hot as sweat trickles down my legs. I try to imagine what it was like for my grandparents on the way to an unknown home in an unknown country. Like our group today, they too may have passed cotton fields, donkeys hauling carriages, and vendors with pyramids of watermelons.

Deep in the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum archives, I had found an address that my grandfather listed as the family's Uzbekistan home: Kaganovitcha 5, Juma. But every Uzbek I asked was certain that street name would have been changed. It had been titled as such for Lazar Kaganovich—nicknamed Iron Lazar—one of Stalin's henchmen, who played a role in the fatal famine of millions.

When we arrive in Juma, Anait and Lilia flag down taxi drivers and ask if they know Kaganovitcha Street. Everyone says no. We walk into a restaurant and ask the people inside. No again.

Then I remember my grandparents arrived by train, slept the first night on the ground next to the station, and found a house nearby. The woman running the restaurant tells us the old depot is over a bridge. Anait recalls a detail I'd recounted to her: My grandparents had rented from a Tatar family, part of an ethnic Muslim minority. During Soviet rule, Samarkand was divided into neighborhoods, and Anait assumes Juma was the same. She asks the manager if there was a Tatar settlement in Juma. *Bingo*. But that was decades ago. Only one Tatar group remains.

The conversation is too rapid for my companions to translate. Not until we are walking over the bridge do I realize that the middle-aged man from the restaurant with warm eyes, a round face, and a loose gait has offered to drive us to the Tatars. He opens the doors to a Soviet Lada sedan with broken windows. "This was once the coolest car around," Anait reminisces. The driver steers us across cobblestoned roads, honking and waving at each passing car.

In a courtyard on the outskirts of town, we find the four members of Juma's sole Tatar community taking a break from their morning labor. Farmers, they trace their origins to Crimea. A woman wearing a colorful floral headscarf and cutoff jeans tells me that Stalin deported her mother to the Ural region and then her mother made her way to Uzbekistan in search of workable land. Another says his family arrived later and not by choice: When the German forces retreated from Crimea in 1944, the Soviets packed more than 183,000 Crimean Tatars into cattle cars; over the course of weeks, the entire community was sent to Central Asia. My mind reels as I try to keep track of the complex layers of people—more than a million—whom the Uzbeks welcomed during and after World War II.

Most of this ethnic mix is now gone. The woman confirms they're the last Tatars and that they too have never heard of Kaganovitcha Street. Then, an animated conversation erupts: There is a Russian woman whom they call the oldest person in town. Perhaps she might know.

T

THROUGH THE GATE of a turquoise house we see a sprightly woman, hair dyed black and purple, wearing a velour jacket. She invites us into her home. The walls are painted the same brilliant turquoise, the floor is covered with carpets, and raspberries she picked from her garden rest on the counter.

The woman, named Zoja, offers us some black tea and chats easily with Anait and Lilia in Russian. They suddenly exclaim in unison, "Wow, wow!" We do not need to search any longer. We have found the one person who seems to hold memories of Kaganovitcha Street. And, miraculously, we are on it. Zoja has lived almost her whole life at what was once #6 Kaganovitcha. The address I am searching for, #5, is across the street.

Zoja tells us of a brutal childhood: Her father died in jail and was buried without a marker; her mother was murdered at the train station. She found ways to endure the frigid nights and scorching days. And she recalls playing with two girls in the house my grandparents rented, and how they left with all the other Tatars.

I follow Zoja across the street, pausing to pick a cherry from her tree. Two girls lounge in the wide, arched entryway to the house where my father spent his first months of life. A bald Uzbek man with gold teeth answers the door. He smiles broadly, evidently tickled by the American visitor.

It is to this home that my grandparents would have retreated when my great-uncle died in the local jail, just like Zoja's father. Here that they would have read a letter from the mayor of their hometown in Poland, Zamość, responding to my grandmother's inquiry: The fate of their parents and sisters left behind was the fate of all the Jews. The town was *Judenfrei*—free of Jews.

I do not tell the owner about the pain my family endured here. Instead, I smile. I can sense how a place that for my family was marked by desperation is his greatest pride. He tells us the house was a big purchase; he rebuilt it with a combination of mud and straw walls. I linger in the garden but refrain from crossing the threshold into the home. I realize Zoja, with her spirit and stories, is the link to my family's past that I had hoped to discover. The redone home is this man's family story. I thank him with the Uzbek gesture of putting my hand to my heart and say goodbye.

What was once a vague outline is now a place I have smelled and felt and touched.

There is one last place I want to see in Juma. In an oral history recording I found of my grandmother in the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum archives, she said that no matter how destitute the years in Uzbekistan were, in the evenings, the women would dress in nicer clothes and stroll along the train tracks with other Polish refugees. We walk a few blocks to the shuttered station, with its closed ticket office, mint-green chairs, and a kitchen.

Like my grandmother, the four other female family members traveling with them were all young during the war, but none of the women got pregnant for five years. And then most of their stomachs began to stretch. "We knew already the war was ending," my grandmother recalled. In June 1945, my father was born.

The following summer, my grandparents, holding their year-old son, would climb onto a train to Poland, completing a journey of 5,000 miles, only to confirm that the loved ones left behind were a pile of ashes. My grandparents and father spent four more years in Europe's refugee camps before they boarded a boat to New York City in 1950.

The sun no longer beats down on us as we walk away from the train station and return over the bridge. On our drive back to Samarkand, I sit in the front seat, the cool evening air blowing, and I feel relieved. What was once a vague outline is now a place I have smelled and felt and touched. Juma was the site of so much heartache, but also of joy. I feel my father's presence, even as I yearn for more: to share his exuberance at this complex site where he entered into this world and to cry with him in awe at how unbelievably far he traveled. Ⓐ

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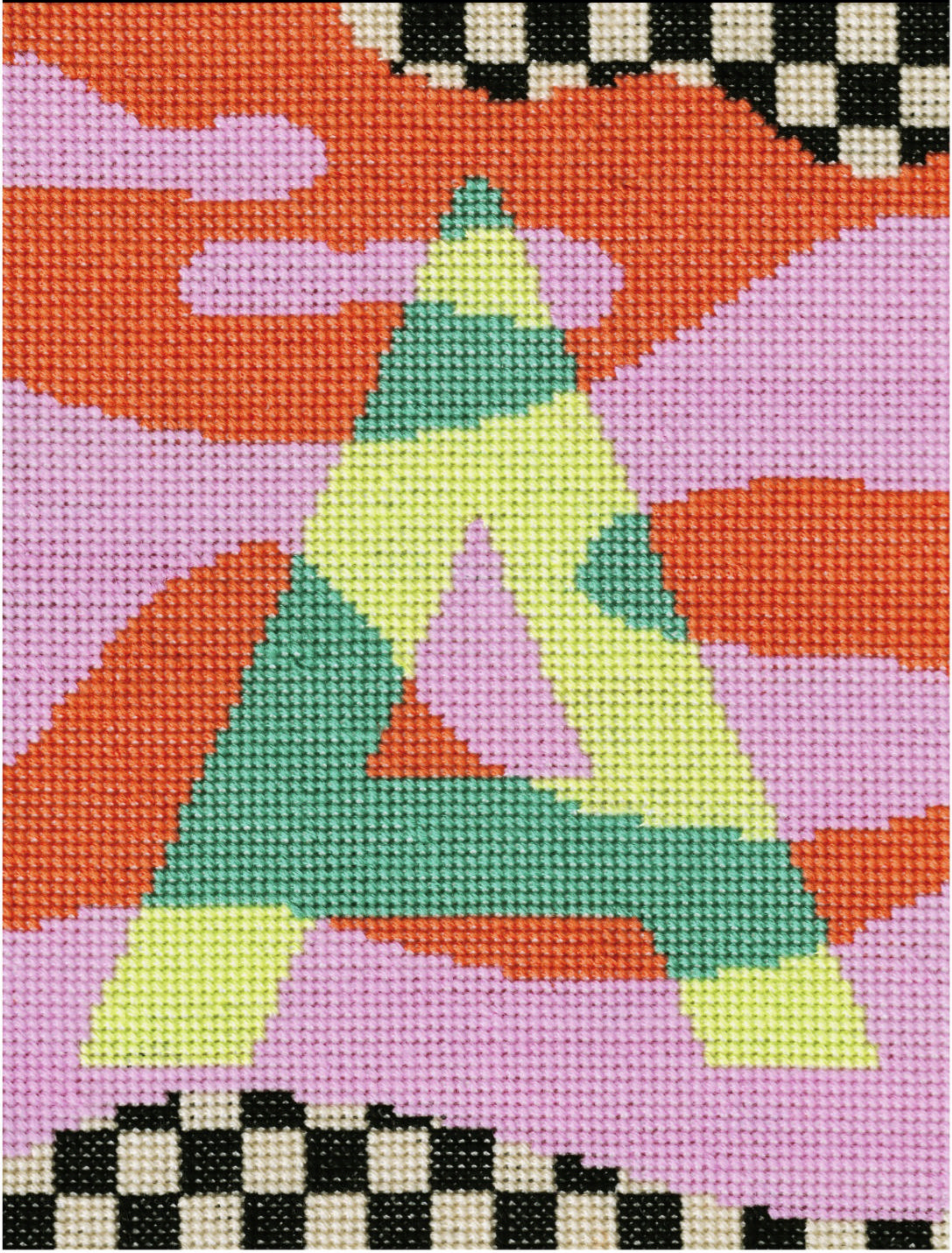
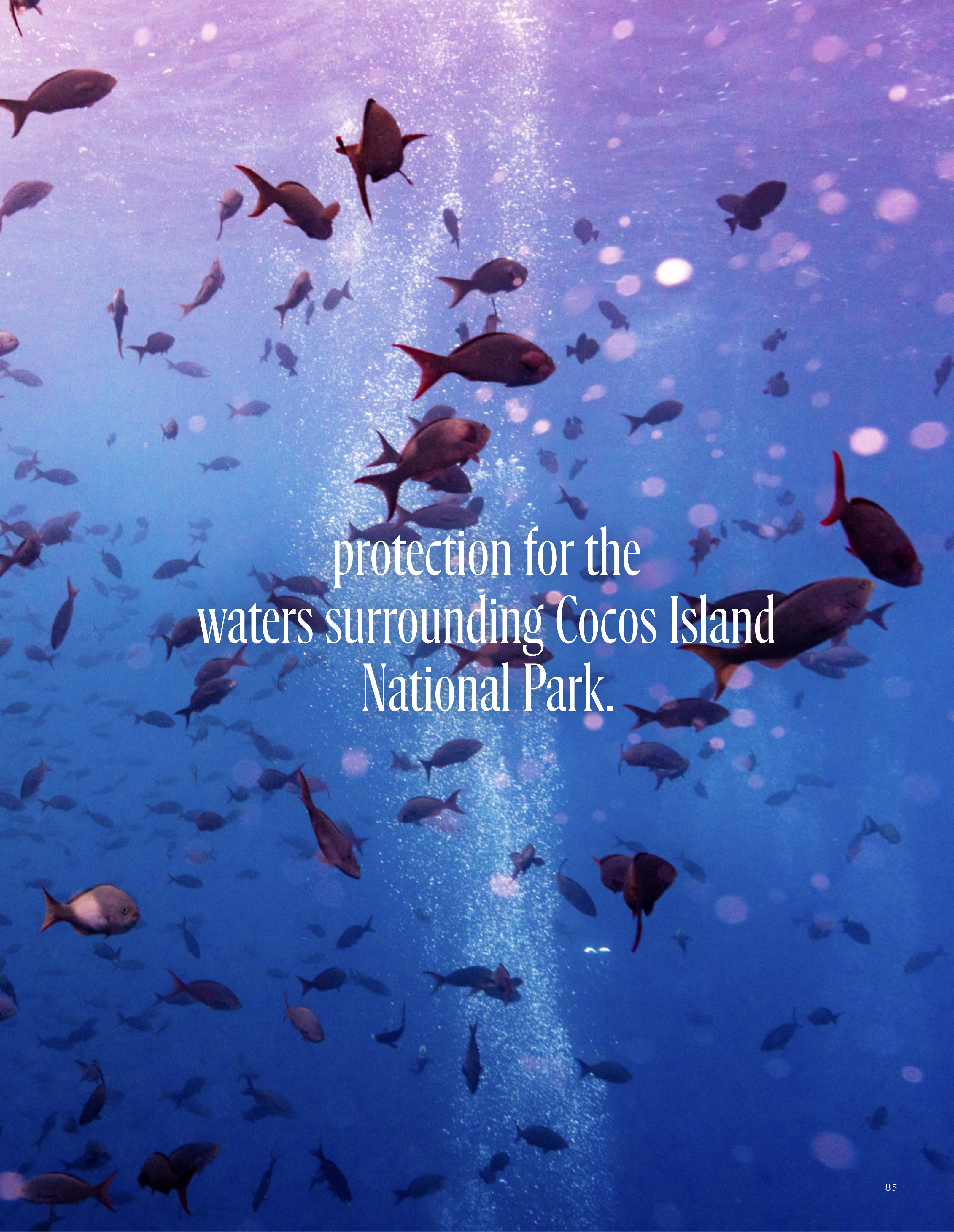


Art by **MEGAN STEINWAND REYES**

In 2021, Costa Rica made headlines when it committed to increasing



protection for the
waters surrounding Cocos Island
National Park.

In reality, things
are far more complicated.

TREASURE ISLAND

BY MONA GABLE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY KATIE ORLINSKY

IN THE AQUAMARINE seas some 330 miles off Costa Rica's Pacific coast lies one of the most pristine islands on Earth. Spanning nine square miles, the rectangular landmass is called Isla del Coco, or Cocos Island. A cloud forest breathes there. Waterfalls pour from jagged cliffs into rushing rivers, and rain-soaked jungles shelter some 400 insect species and 156 species of birds, including the endemic Cocos finch. In 1978, Costa Rica declared Cocos Island and its surrounding waters a national park. Today, it is uninhabited except for the park rangers, paramedics, and volunteers who live there. It is so remote that, aside from the pigs, deer, cats, and rats that humans brought to the island starting in the 16th century, it has no native mammals.

Cocos is even more revered for its spectacular marine life. Within its cold, nutrient-rich underwater corridors, where two currents collide, hundreds of species such as manta rays and sea turtles float and flit. The biggest stars of Cocos Island, however, are its sharks. Sometimes called "Shark Island," it sits amid seas containing some of the largest schooling populations of critically endangered scalloped hammerhead sharks; its waters also support the gigantic whale shark, and tiger, thresher, and silky sharks. The legendary French ocean explorer Jacques Cousteau, who made countless dives into the turbulent currents surrounding Cocos starting in 1976, reportedly called it the "most beautiful island in the world." UNESCO, which named Cocos Island National Park a World Heritage site in 1997, states it has "irreplaceable global conservation value, reminding us what parts of tropical oceans historically looked like." Renowned marine biologist Sylvia Earle, founder of the nonprofit Mission Blue, declared Cocos Island one of her Hope Spots for ocean conservation.

In December 2021, the island made environmental news: Costa Rica would expand Cocos Island National Park to 27 times its original size. With that, Costa Rica's endangered sharks—one of the most important creatures in the ocean's wild web of life—could flourish, their migratory paths to the Galápagos and other areas protected from poaching, overfishing, and pollution. Combined with the Bicentennial Marine Management Area (BMMA), the expansion would protect more than 62,000 square miles.

Ocean activists everywhere rejoiced. Costa Rica would be one of the first countries to contribute to the United Nations' goal of safeguarding 30 percent of the planet's seas by 2030. (To achieve this, the U.N. proposes that each ocean-adjacent country reserve 30 percent of its waters for conservation; less than 8 percent of the world's oceans are currently protected.) Just the month before, at the U.N. Climate Change Conference, four countries—Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, and Ecuador—made headlines, vowing to jointly preserve at least 125,000 square miles in the Eastern Tropical Pacific, a biodiversity hot spot. As someone who loves the water, I, too, was excited by the news.

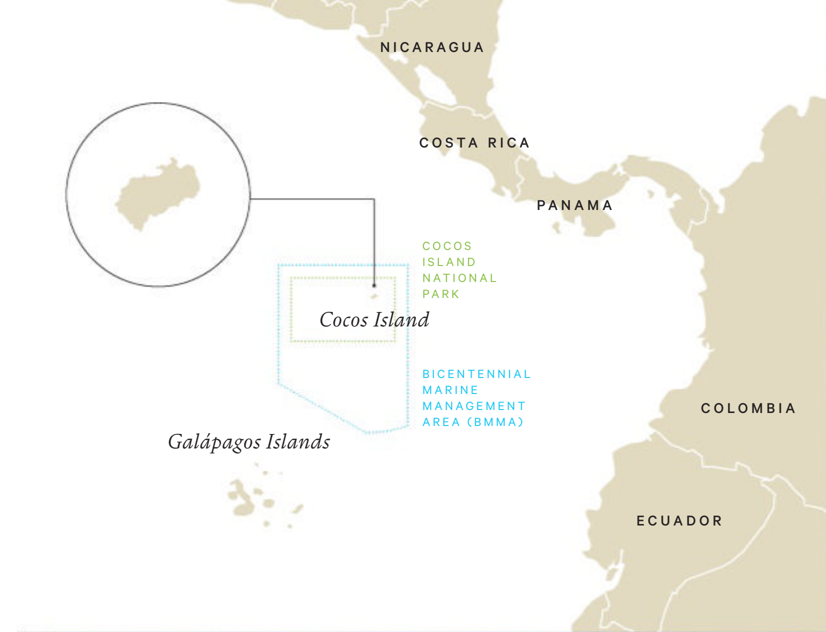
But the vast undertaking of marine protection surrounding Cocos Island was far more nuanced and turbulent than it initially appeared. It involved not only environmental leaders, several scientists, and Costa Rican NGOs but also the private sector, tourism officials, the Costa Rican Institute of Fisheries and Aquaculture (INCOPESCA), and three presidential administrations. And, above all, it curtailed a critical swimway corridor, failing to connect Cocos to Ecuador, leaving some of the ocean's most endangered species vulnerable. Trying to untangle the complications, I was left wondering, was the expansion of protection a genuine beacon of hope and good intent? In 2022, I traveled to Costa Rica to find out.

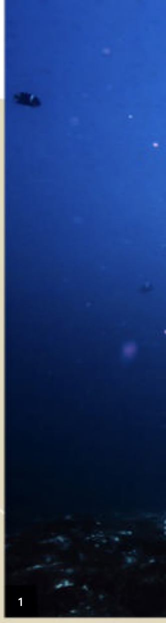
HERE'S THE THING: I did not get to Cocos Island. I tried to, desperately, but the island's splendid isolation also makes it difficult to visit. Traveling there entails a 36-hour journey by boat, which departs from the port city of Puntarenas. A permit is required, and tourism other than hiking is limited. There are no lodges, no campgrounds. In 2021, the park had 2,572 visitors. By comparison, Manuel Antonio National Park, a lowland forest teeming with howler and white-faced capuchin monkeys on the country's Pacific coast, drew more than 300,000.

Instead, one morning in the beach enclave of Santa Teresa, I meet Carolina Ramírez, a scuba diving instructor and the founder of Unidos Por Los Tiburones (United for Sharks), a four-year-old educational campaign focused on Costa Rica's sharks. Ramírez, whose love for one of Earth's oldest creatures was born in the rolling surf of the Pacific coast, has plunged into the seas surrounding Cocos Island countless times. As we sit at an outdoor café discussing Costa Rica and conservation, a parade of ATVs and motorcycles ferrying dogs, surfboards, and small kids bumps by.

Smaller than West Virginia, Costa Rica accounts for 0.03 percent of the planet's land surface but 5 percent of the world's biodiversity. Its policies are lauded as a global model for responsible tourism, partly due to the Costa Rican government's long vision, and also because of myriad environmental and scientific NGOs and startups that saw ecotourism as vital to the country's economic future.

More than five decades ago, Costa Rica was ravaging its tropical rain forests, inflicting one of the highest rates of deforestation

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1 Since February 2023, Costa Rica has had a ban on fishing for scalloped hammerhead sharks, which are critically endangered.

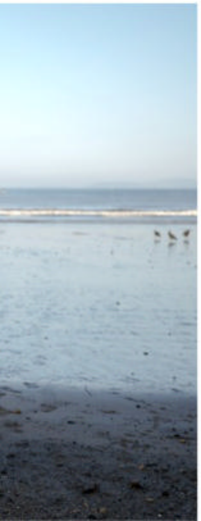
2 Though rich with marine life, the waters off Cocos Island have strong currents and are not recommended for inexperienced divers.

3 The fishing village of Tárcoles sits south of the port city of Puntarenas.

4 There are more than 200 waterfalls on Cocos Island.

5 Offshore, the water temperature surrounding the island averages 75–84°F year round.

6 Cocos Island's distance from the mainland makes it difficult for many travelers to access—but a draw for divers.



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1 *Randall Arauz was awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize in 2010 for his work in shark conservation.*

2 *Arauz has made more than 1,000 dives off Cocos Island, where visibility is best during the winter months.*

3 *The Cocos Island shoreline. From Panama to Palau, nations are creating marine protected areas to preserve oceans—but they are complicated to manage in practice.*

on Earth, nearly 50 percent. The news brought an influx of international researchers and environmentalists to the country, helping to raise awareness of its beauty and wildlife to the wider world. Álvaro Ugalde, a biologist and the father of Costa Rica's fabled national park system, was instrumental in the country's shift to preserve nature: In 1970, along with scientist Mario Boza, Ugalde convinced the government to create the nation's first national park, Poás Volcano, which is located in central Costa Rica.

Soon, small tourism outfits began providing lodging and wilderness tours, drawing travelers and creating jobs. As ecotourism flourished, so did Costa Rica's economy. In 1997, the government also began paying farmers to preserve trees. As a result, in 2011, Costa Rica became the first tropical nation in the world to have reversed deforestation. Twelve years later, more than 25 percent of the country's land comprises protected parks and nature reserves.

Slowly, Costa Rica began turning its conservation focus to its waters, which are 10 times greater than its land, and where 85 of its reported 6,778 marine species are endemic. By 2012, the nation had 166 marine protected areas, which covered 50 percent of its coastlines. Yet in Costa Rica, where more than half of the 99 shark and ray species are threatened by extinction, sharks have long been a hot-button issue, emblematic of the challenges between balancing conservation and developing a sustainable fishing sector. (Though current president Rodrigo Chaves Robles signed an executive decree in February 2023 banning the fishing of hammerhead sharks, even today, most sharks remain threatened and may still be caught by longline fishing vessels under the legal loophole of "accompanying fauna.") Says Ramírez: "Everybody sees sharks as the enemy, as the monster of the ocean. People don't realize how important they are. We need to talk about sharks as the most magical, curious, amazing creatures on the planet."

Ramírez tells me that if sharks are fished out, other catch that fishers rely on—like tuna and snapper—dwindle, too. Science supports this: As apex predators, sharks help manage other species and ensure robust

3

population growth. They are critical to healthy oceans. There is also a financial incentive to protect sharks. During one season at Cocos Island, activities such as diving, snorkeling, and boat tours generate enough money that one hammerhead shark is worth about $86,000. Over 20 years, the sum reaches $1.6 million, according to nonprofit Mission Blue.

CONSERVATIONIST RANDALL ARAUZ has the weathered look of a man who lives on the ocean. One of Costa Rica's best-known scientists, Arauz is a founding member of MigraMar, a nonprofit organization studying threatened marine migratory species in the Eastern Pacific; he is also the international marine conservation policy advisor for Marine Watch International, a nonprofit devoted to ocean conservation. Arauz has been to Cocos Island 55 times and made more than 1,000 dives in the waters off the island, tagging hundreds of sea turtles, mantas, and sharks.

On a humid Monday morning, after a two-hour drive from San José, Arauz and I arrive in Tárcoles, a small fishing village in the Gulf of Nicoya on the Pacific coast. A dozen or more people occupy the shore, their small, brightly colored boats scattered across the sand. Thousands of Costa Ricans squeeze out a living as fishers, their livelihood dependent on seasonal fish populations, mainly mahi-mahi, tuna, and red snapper. As their country moves to protect its seas, they too are facing challenges adapting to more sustainable fishing practices.

> "People don't realize how important they are. We need to talk about sharks as the most magical, curious, amazing creatures on the planet."

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APEX

Most wearing T-shirts, sandals, and shorts, the fishers have already been out to sea. Now they're cleaning up. One young man with a dark beard stands shirtless, tattoos swimming down his arms and chest, winding a long nylon fishing line. Another is posted at a stained wooden table, machete in hand, carving large tuna into even slabs of cherry-colored steaks. An older man we chat with in Spanish, José, says he used to sell hammerheads when other fish species were scarce. But when he discovered the sharks were endangered, he quit. We ask others about their livelihood: *How is overfishing affecting them?* Some men admit they're worried; others are reticent to say.

During the process to create the enlarged national park, Arauz was secretary of the official Cocos Island Marine Management Council. But before the park outlines were finalized, in 2015, Arauz and a team of scientists made a discovery: Instead of swimming along the marine corridor to the Galápagos, some critically endangered sharks were migrating between Cocos Island and the seamounts (underwater mountains) of Las Gemelas and West Cocos, likely moving from one place to the next to forage. This suggested that seamounts where the sharks were known to aggregate should be folded into the new marine sanctuary. Other studies, including one from the University of Costa Rica, buoyed their results. Despite this, when he asked government officials to include the seamounts, Arauz says, he was ignored. He was so upset that the corridor was left out that he quit the council. "While we walked out with a bigger national park, there was no swimway," he says. "How are we going to protect these animals if we don't protect the swimway?"

Former Costa Rican president Carlos Alvarado Quesada, who expanded the size of Cocos Island National Park and the BMMA, agrees that negotiations over the reserve had been intense. "This was not an easy path," says Alvarado, who is currently a professor at Tufts University. "But you need to choose where to invest. My approach was that the largest contribution we can do was Cocos Island. The boundaries were defined by the best science available at the time." Before, less than 3 percent of Costa Rica's ocean was off-limits to fishing. Now, 30 percent of its seas are protected. "And that guarantees a future for many, many species," he says.

ONE AFTERNOON IN SAN JOSÉ I visit Iria Chacón, a biologist and conservation manager for Friends of Cocos Island (FAICO), which was founded in 1994. A small Costa Rican organization dedicated to marine conservation, FAICO was a central player in creating the Cocos Island and BMMA reserves. For two decades it has devotedly provided resources to Cocos Island—rain gear, educational videos, conservation plans. We sit around a blond wood table in a conference room. Three color photographs of Cocos adorn the sapphire walls.

Chacón helped draft the plan to configure the Cocos Island National Park expansion, trying to satisfy various interest groups, from park rangers to fishers to environmentalists. While Chacón was happy with the expanded national park, she was candid about the compromises in

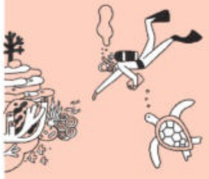
5 Trips for Exploring the Ocean

Here's how to get out on (and under) the water sustainably.

BY CHLOE ARROJADO / ILLUSTRATIONS BY BETH WALROND

❶ Snorkel in Indonesia

The Oceanic Society provides more than 20 snorkeling tours around the world, including a 12-day trip in Indonesia's Raja Ampat islands. Based aboard a motored schooner, up to 10 participants travel to Batanta Island, Waigeo Island, and other spots in the archipelago as they explore waters home to more than 1,500 species of fish and marine mammals. Participants learn about conserving the species found in the area from naturalist guides, who use sighting data to contribute to the region's conservation plans. *From $11,700*



❷ Help conserve the Great Barrier Reef in Australia

Off the coast of Cairns, travelers can complete their Open Water Diver certificate and take a marine conservation tour with Australia-based No Limit Adventures. During a 12-day trip, participants might do everything from work on coral health surveys to count species in partnership with the Australian government's Eye on the Reef coral monitoring program. The itinerary also offers beach cleanups and visits to the Cairns Turtle Rehabilitation Centre. *From $2,454*

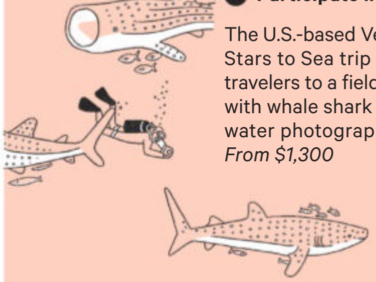
❸ Sea kayak in Antarctica

Travelers on Aurora Expeditions' Antarctica cruises can add guided sea-kayaking expeditions to their adventure. The Australian company's main ships are designed with reduced fuel consumption in mind, and the one- or two-person kayaks allow guests to access smaller bays and iceberg pathways that bigger Zodiacs can't get to. *Surcharge from $900*

❹ Scuba dive in Iceland

Explore North Atlantic waters with a Reykjavík-based tour from Dive.IS, an Icelandic dive center that's been given a Green Star Award by PADI for its commitment to conservation. A three-day journey takes drysuit-wearing participants through sites on the Reykjanes Peninsula and around the Golden Circle to see flatfish, wolffish, and other marine animals. One of the unique stops on the tour is Silfra, in Thingvellir National Park—the only place in the world where you can dive between two tectonic plates. *From $1,069*

❺ Participate in citizen research in Mexico



The U.S.-based Vermilion Sea Institute leads the six-day Stars to Sea trip in the Gulf of California, bringing travelers to a field station in Bahía de los Ángeles to help with whale shark research. Activities include underwater photography and uploading whale shark data. *From $1,300*

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the BMMA. To support local fishing communities, sustainable fishing of species like tuna would be allowed, putting endangered sharks at risk of getting caught. It was, she concedes, a trade-off. “You need a balance,” she says. “You need no-take areas in the ocean without fisheries, but you also have to be realistic. There are a lot of communities leaning on that resource.”

Studies have shown that no-take marine protected areas actually increase fish populations and biodiversity. After then-president Barack Obama more than quadrupled the size of Hawai‘i’s Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument in 2016, catches of yellowfin tuna jumped by 54 percent outside of the reserve, and bigeye tuna catches rose by 12 percent. There is similar hope that by limiting fishing to the BMMA, and not allowing it in the national park, that sector of Costa Rica’s economy will benefit. A greater shift is underway, although more slowly: Since 2019, with support from the World Bank, the country’s fisheries agency, INCOPESCA, has been implementing a $90 million project to grow sustainable fishing across the country.

“You need a balance. You need no-take areas in the ocean without fisheries, but you also have to be realistic.”

In September 2021, Costa Rica committed to collaborating with the nonprofit MarViva to strengthen research and monitoring on Cocos Island; the country also signed a five-year agreement with U.S.-based WildAid, a conservation group that will help implement better surveillance in marine areas. Now, it is faced with creating a management plan for the reserves.

The size of Cocos Island’s marine protected area alone is formidable. To control illegal fishing, the government will need to pour millions into technology, surveillance, and law enforcement and hire more park rangers to patrol the seas. (Currently, the park has roughly 20.) To complicate matters, rangers also lack such basics as a consistent supply of fuel for their patrol boats, so even though they might spot some poachers, they usually can’t catch them—much less pursue industrial fishing vessels. (This is also because of speed.) Warming and rising seas due to climate change, oil spills, plastic pollution, and habitat destruction—all caused by humans—are additional threats. Costa Rica must also, Chacón says, do significantly more research in the marine reserves and collect more data on its abundant sea creatures, so it can determine how to effectively protect their habitats.

This page: There are no accommodations on Cocos Island, but there is a park ranger station and information center for visitors.

Previous spread: Researchers deploy acoustic receivers to monitor shark migration at the West Cocos seamount.

In June 2022, Costa Rica got some good news about financing those needs: The Bezos Earth Fund would give $30 million in grants to be divided among Costa Rica, Panama, Ecuador, and Colombia—countries bordering the Eastern Tropical Pacific—to connect and shelter marine reserves, protecting life in the corridor.

Tiny as it is, Costa Rica still serves as a model and beacon for other countries on the importance of preserving the environment. But everyone I speak with makes clear that its work to protect the seas surrounding Cocos Island and in the BMMA is just beginning. Chacón emphasizes that fishing needs to be made more sustainable, that regulations need to be toughened. "The implementation of the marine protected areas is going to take a lot of surveillance," she says. "And at some point, you need to demonstrate that these marine protected areas are working, so we can tell Costa Ricans. So we can tell other countries." Ⓐ

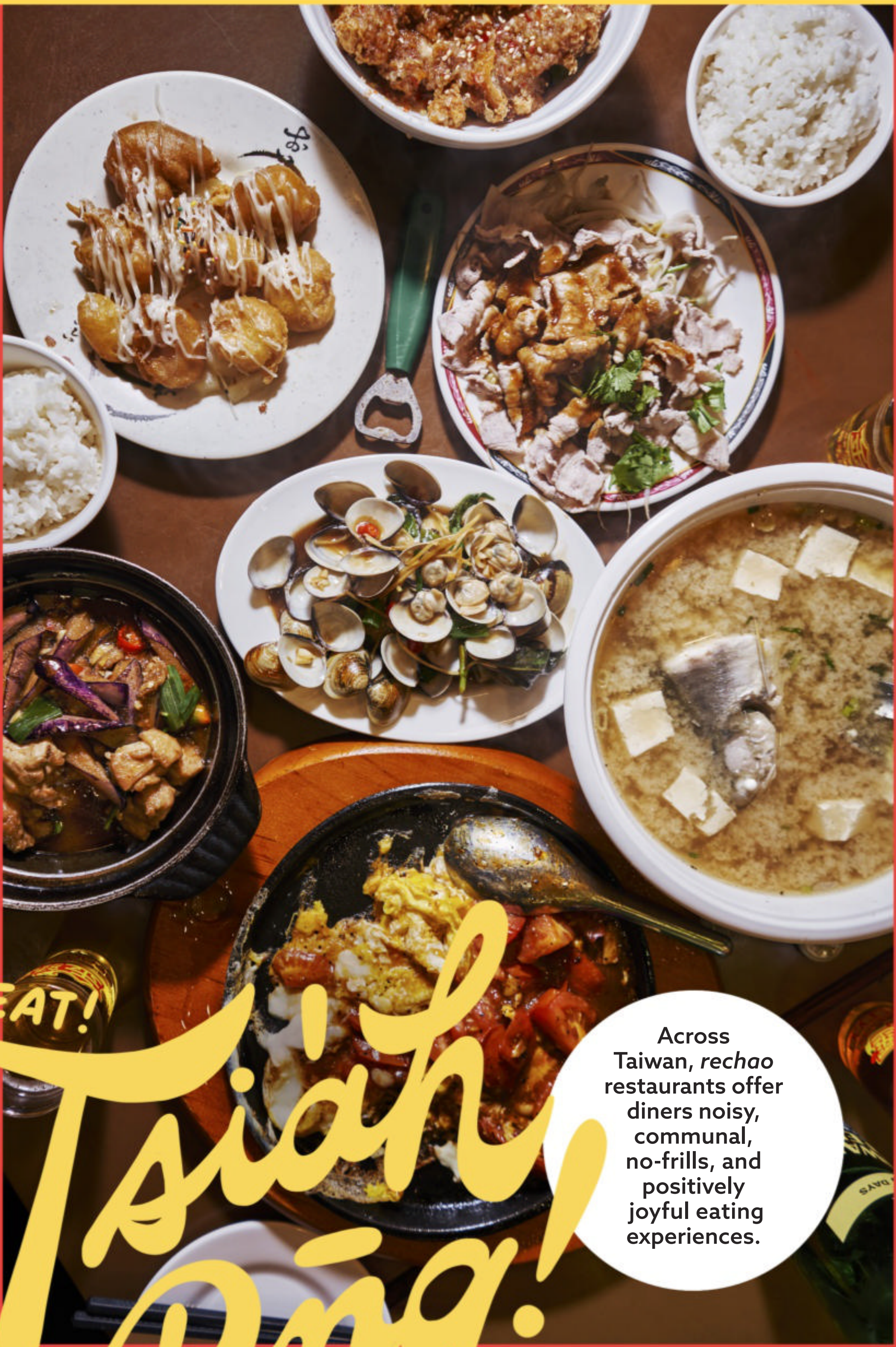
Writer Mona Gable is profiled on page 14.

Photographer Katie Orlinsky is based in New York City. Her work has been featured in National Geographic*,* Smithsonian Magazine*, and the* New Yorker.

by CLARISSA WEI

Photographs by AN RONG XU

Lettering by JOCELYN CHUNG



LET'S EAT! Tsiàh pn̄g!

Across Taiwan, *rechao* restaurants offer diners noisy, communal, no-frills, and positively joyful eating experiences.

I'VE BEEN EATING at Taiwanese *rechao* restaurants for as long as I can remember. My earliest memories of Taipei are of sitting outdoors at a short table with my parents as they ordered platters of wok-fried eggplant and poached calamari with sweet and sour chili sauce. Certain details stand out: the bright vermilion hue of the tables contrasting with pastel-pink plastic chairs, the flicker of a broken streetlamp on the corner, the sweat of my dad's beer bottle, the incessant buzz of motorcycles whizzing by. As a young child visiting Taiwan from my home in the United States, I found rechao chaotic. But when I eventually moved to Taipei when I was 29, rechao restaurants became a sanctuary—places where I could meet up with friends and sit in the familiar, comforting noises of the island.

In Mandarin Chinese, rechao translates to "hot stir-fry" and refers to a type of late-night restaurant—usually with squat outdoor seating by the street—that offers Taiwanese classics such as three-cup chicken, greasy plates of fried rice, and stir-fried clams swimming in garlic. These restaurants are not found at night markets—street markets that really come to life after sunset. Instead, they are an entity all their own. They exist in almost every major neighborhood on the island, but they're particularly common in northern Taiwan.

The rechao serves dishes that are almost always baptized by fire—tossed and turned in giant woks. A high-powered stove is mandatory: Rechao food comes marching out fast, a quick progression of hot plates. Speed is a noted feature of the cooking experience, and the food—salty, with multiple layers of umami—is designed to pair well with beer. Rechao, though, is more than just a restaurant. It's a culture.

Perhaps most importantly, the rechao menu tells a cohesive story of what it means to be Taiwanese, an identity that is multicultural and nuanced. These eateries are not one-dish wonders; they are generalists constructed to appease the masses. The cuisine is unfussy and quick and reflects the abundance of crops, seafood, and proteins on the island. Says Kuo Chung-Hao, a professor of food history at Taipei Medical University: "Rechao food is the food of the people."

For me and my friends, it's also an excuse to host a large party. Whenever a returnee, visitor, or transplant comes into town, one of us will organize a rechao welcome dinner.

"Rechao, Friday 7 p.m.?" I'll write over LINE, Taiwan's messaging app of choice, blasting the note to a motley group of friends and acquaintances. And by the end of the week, a dozen of us will congregate around several long tables. Illuminated by the warm

This page: High heat was originally used in rechao cooking to wipe out bacteria, and most dishes are still cooked over an open flame.

Previous page: Diners gather at Taipei's Baxian Grill, which is open until 2 a.m. most days.

glow of yellow paper lanterns strung up high, we'll spend the night as worshipful congregants indulging in spicy braised stinky tofu and clay pot chicken simmered in a classic trinity of soy sauce, rice wine, and sesame oil. As the evening progresses, the table gets increasingly louder, antithetical to the introverted politeness that permeates Taiwanese society during the day.

As a writer who specializes in reporting on Taiwanese food culture, I find it difficult to properly contextualize rechao's significance without drawing parallels to other cuisines. Similar to the Japanese *izakaya* and the British pub, yes, the rechao is a place where people meet up and drink. To me, it is emblematic, essential.

Unfortunately, the food of the rechao spread remains largely overlooked in the culinary canon of the island. I spent the past year and a half researching the ins and outs of Taiwanese food for a cookbook I'm writing, diving into different aspects of the cuisine. I discovered that as a destination, Taiwan is often pigeonholed as a place for night-market dishes or hot bowls of beef noodle soup. Rarely does rechao get more than a passing mention.

Part of that is geographic. While rechao is ubiquitous throughout the country, it hasn't really taken off abroad. The last major wave of emigration out of Taiwan took place in the 1980s, right before rechao as a concept was beginning to bloom, so it remains an enigma to much of the Taiwanese diaspora (with a

中央市場生猛海鮮100
香都大飯店
Charming Castle Hotel
洋港海鮮
100

The modern rechao restaurant combines the rowdiness of a market with the spontaneity of a seafood restaurant. There's one essential throughline across eateries: For a rechao to be a success, a high-powered stove is required, allowing chefs to turn out more than 100 dishes on a menu.

few exceptions). Its obscurity is understandable: Taiwanese food as a whole is rarely given a spotlight, and when it does receive mention, it often gets a cursory glance or is lumped under a broad umbrella of Chinese cuisine.

TO UNDERSTAND the significance of the rechao, one must first consider Taiwan's layered history. The nation on the edge of the Pacific Ocean has a culinary scene that has shifted with its colonial influences over the centuries. Originally an island populated by Austronesian nationals, Taiwan saw Chinese and Dutch settlers begin to trickle in centuries ago, many of whom moved here to fish and to work the land. Immigration picked up until the Austronesian inhabitants were eventually outnumbered by the Chinese, and by the early 19th century, parts of the island were declared a province of China under the jurisdiction of the now-defunct Qing dynasty. The Japanese empire took over the island in the late 19th century, and in 1945, it was handed over to the Nationalist Chinese government—an administration exiled to Taipei after years of civil war with the Communists in China.

In the 1980s, things shifted once again, when Taiwan officially transitioned to a democracy. Out of this freedom of choice came a distinct Taiwanese identity separate from China and Japan. Roughly a decade later, the first rechao restaurants on the island appeared.

"It really took off in the 1990s, during the height of Taiwan's economic prosperity," Kuo says of the rechao experience. "When people got off of work, they wanted to unwind."

The practice of eating by the street has been part of Taiwan's culinary culture since the late 18th and early 19th centuries, when peddlers would walk through busy streets with food in buckets dangling from poles balanced on their shoulders. The peddlers would congregate around Taoist temples—crowded places of worship—eventually forming the foundation of Taiwanese night markets. Meanwhile, near the coast, seafood restaurants stocked with fish tanks started serving fresh catches, with chefs cooking what was available that day. The chefs at these seafood spots eventually started to expand their repertoire, Kuo says, and that turned into the rechao restaurant.

Live fish tanks remain a feature at some rechaos, where patrons can pick what they want the chef to cook. Some rechao owners even allow customers to bring in fish that they catch themselves, which is what He Chong-Yu, a Taiwanese food blogger, and his friends do on a semiregular basis: Autumn is crab season, winter is cuttlefish. But for most rechao restaurants today, the menu encompasses much more than the sea.

The rechao menu is informed by all the island's cultural influences throughout the years. Japan comes through in the platters of delicate sashimi served with a dollop of tubed wasabi. Grilled salmon is often prepared with a generous layer of miso. Other dishes, rather than literal replicas of foods found elsewhere, feature a Taiwanese twist. In Sichuan, the southwestern Chinese province where poached pork belly dates back thousands of years, the dish is dressed with chili oil and light soy sauce. But in Taiwan, it's slathered with a diluted concoction of Taiwanese soy paste and ginger. Everything is just a tad bit sweeter at a rechao.

"Taiwanese food is different than Chinese food," says Chen I-Chin, owner of Buzi Restaurant, a rechao eatery in New Taipei City, southwest of Taipei. Chen calls himself the "godfather of rechao" and claims he was the first to popularize the genre in the 2000s. "We took all the eight major cuisines of China and Japanese food and mixed it all together."

As a result, there are dishes at the rechao table that cannot be found anywhere else in the world, such as deep-fried shrimp tossed with sweet mayonnaise, pineapple, and a hefty shower of rainbow sprinkles, or a Hakka-inspired stir-fry with slivers of pork, dried squid, bean curd, and bright sticks of celery. Indigenous Taiwanese ingredients also feature heavily: Ferns, which grow wild and abundantly in Taiwan's subtropical climate, are stir-fried and mixed with pickled seeds of the birdlime tree, which resemble small green olives and taste like sweet capers. Grilled pork sausages are sometimes infused with *maqaw*, an indigenous Taiwanese spice that has notes of both pepper and lemon.

While a menu comprising 100 to 200 dishes might seem daunting to a cook, all the owners I spoke with emphasized that it's not that complicated. "Chefs just need to know the basics," says Hu Nei-Ta, the co-owner of Fat Man Eatery, a rechao restaurant in Taipei. "They should know how to cook vegetables, fried rice, and fried noodles and how to fry, grill, and make cold dishes. After that, whipping up more than 100 [different] dishes isn't a problem."

Beer is also central to the experience. Taiwan has produced beer domestically since the Japanese colonial era, but sales skyrocketed in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when foreign beer brands like Heineken were imported en masse. Today, rechao restaurants account for nearly 45 percent of all beer sales in the country.

THE RECHAO MENU TELLS A COHESIVE STORY OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE TAIWANESE, AN IDENTITY THAT IS *multicultural* AND *nuanced.*

Rechao the Right Way

by Mae Hamilton

1. ORDER THIS

Fried rice, stir-fried squid, ferns, and more: The dishes shown at right are some of rechao's trademarks.

2. VISIT THIS

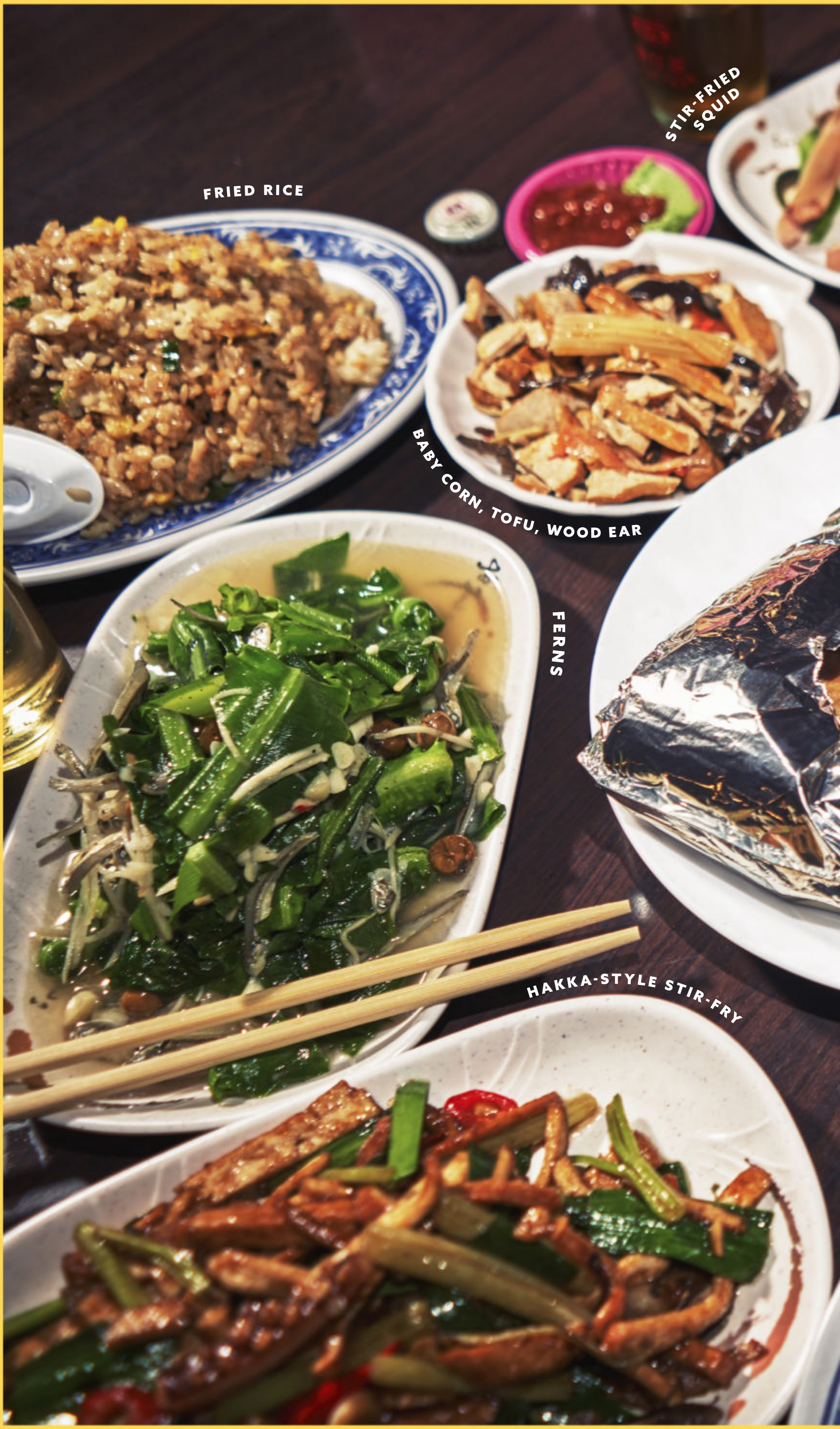
One of the best places to eat rechao in Taipei is the red-light district, in the Zhongshan neighborhood near the intersection of Civic Boulevard and Xinsheng Elevated Road. Popular spots include Pin Xian 100 NT Dollar Stir Fries (known for its affordable menu), Old Friends Chinese Restaurant (order the duck), and Xiān Dìng Wèi Shēngměng Huó Hǎixiān, which offers a large seafood selection.

3. PLAY THIS

A classic Taiwanese drinking game, 15-15-20 requires two people, who sit facing each other while holding both fists up, in rock, paper, scissors mode. The first player calls out any increment of five between zero and 20. The second player must guess how many fingers to unfurl for both players' hands to collectively add up to the number called. If the number of fingers does not match the number called, then the silent player must drink. (Note: There are many variations of this game—each is equally fun to play.)

4. DRINK THIS

Taiwan Beer is currently produced by the Taiwan Tobacco and Liquor Corporation, which traces its roots to Japanese colonial times. The government of that era began brewing a Japanese-style ale, which they dubbed Takasago Beer. In 1945, the incoming Chinese Nationalist government kept the beer-brewing business, changed the name to Taiwan Beer, and began adding rice to the recipe. Today, the company produces lagers, stouts, and malts, but the most popular is its Gold Medal variety, which is still brewed with Taiwanese rice (and is also available without alcohol).



FRIED BURDOCK
BITTER MELON WITH SALTED EGG
THREE-CUP CHICKEN
STINKY TOFU
FRIED TOFU WITH SALTED EGG
DRAFT BEER
ONLY 18 DAYS
TAIWAN BEER

In 2019, Taiwan saw a record number of international visitors—more than 11 million.

Affordability, too, is another characteristic of rechaos. "I started selling plates for 100 NTD (US$3) a pop, and the lines back then were incredible," says Chen of Buzi Restaurant, which has been open for more than 20 years. Large blue signs plastered on the marquee of his restaurant still advertise these prices, but in reality, only a few dishes cost $3 today. "Food costs have just gotten too high," he says. "Back then rice was cheap, and food was cheap."

It's still cheap—relatively speaking. In my experience, the check at the end of the meal averages out to around US$15 a person. While considerably more expensive than an average dinner out in Taipei, the difference is that rechao is a type of rare elongated social activity, in which people can spend hours eating and drinking in the same spot.

Still, the rechao experience can be uncomfortable; diners oftentimes sit elbow to elbow on short stools close to the ground and grow slick from the reliable layer of humidity that cloaks Taiwan all year round. But despite such potential drawbacks, to rechao devotees, the spread of food is just as flavorful as the fare at any white-tablecloth restaurant in Taipei.

"I see it as a banquet," says Acer Wang, a Taiwanese engineer now based in San Francisco. For Wang, the rechao restaurant is a sacred space—a place where he and his friends order without having to exchange a single word. "There's this unspoken rule where it's one plate a person. You pass down the menu and we each pick something we want. It's very harmonious."

This past year, when September rolled around and the weather in Taipei cooled down, I decided to host another rechao gathering for a couple of new friends from Europe. "I haven't seen you in a while," said the auntie who greeted us, and before I could respond, she began to list the dishes she knew I was going to order: three-cup chicken, beef and pepper stir-fry, deep-fried sweet and sour fish, tender fern shoots, white pepper–dusted baby corn, egg fried rice, stinky tofu, eggplant, and a platter of stir-fried Taiwanese cabbage. I said yes to all her suggestions and added a couple of my own for good measure.

As ever, the dishes came out rapidly. And as my party dined and drank our way through the evening, I didn't have to school anyone on how to eat anything, nor did I have to explain what the dishes were. There and then, I realized that even though I've spent the past year trying to intellectualize rechao and identify its significance in Taiwanese cuisine, the beautiful truth is that the rechao restaurant also speaks for itself—hot, fast, and noisy. Glorious.

Writer Clarissa Wei wrote about Taipei in the January/February 2022 issue of AFAR. Additional reporting by Xin-Yun Wu. Photographer An Rong Xu is profiled on page 14.

THE AFAR GUIDE to Taipei

Located on the northern tip of Taiwan, the country's capital of Taipei is one of the most densely populated cities in Asia. Home to nearly 3 million people in the city proper—and nearly 7 million total counting the larger metro area—Taipei is full of skyscrapers, ancient temples, winding streets, and rechao restaurants galore. *—M.H.*

HOW TO GET AROUND

Taipei has an extensive and reliable subway system, known as Metro Taipei. At a kiosk, purchase a reloadable EasyCard to pay fares; you can also use the card to buy goodies at FamilyMart and 7-Eleven convenience stores.

WHERE TO STAY

Shangri-La Far Eastern
Taipei's Shangri-La is the tallest hotel in the city, clocking in at 43 stories. First constructed in 1994, the building underwent a complete renovation in 2015. Today, the hotel has 420 rooms and suites, a rooftop swimming pool, nine bars and restaurants (including Michelin-approved Shang Palace), and excellent views of the city from its upper floors. It's also some 20 minutes on foot to the roughly 64-acre Daan Forest Park, one of the most popular parks in the city. *From $180.*

Mandarin Oriental, Taipei
Located on busy Dunhua North Road, the Mandarin Oriental is near the city's bustling business neighborhood, the Xinyi District. The hotel's architecture and design are inspired by both Asian and European influences. Among its offerings, the Mandarin Oriental counts 303 rooms and suites, a two-floor spa, and six restaurants. One of the most popular is Ya Ge, which has one Michelin star and serves set menus and traditional Cantonese cuisine made with locally grown produce. *From $400.*

Eslite Hotel
Founded in 1989, the Eslite bookstore chain operates 37 stores in Taiwan and 11 more abroad. It is best known for creating the world's first 24-hour bookstore. In 2015, Eslite opened its first hotel in Taipei's Xinyi District near Songshan Cultural and Creative Park. Designed by architect Toyo Ito, the minimalist, high-ceilinged hotel has 104 rooms; it also features work by local artists and has a library with more than 5,000 books for guests to browse. *From $185.*

WHAT TO DO

Yangmingshan National Park
Taiwan has 10 national parks, but one of the most accessible is Yangmingshan, roughly nine miles north of Taipei. Named the world's first Urban Quiet Park in 2020, Yangmingshan contains hot springs and fumaroles (volcanic vents where sulfurous gases emerge). It's also where travelers can spot the island's tallest dormant volcano, Qixing. Visit from late winter through spring to witness camellia flowers and plum blossoms, then flowering cherry trees, azaleas, and hydrangeas.

The National Palace Museum
More than 700,000 Chinese paintings, porcelain pottery pieces, and artifacts fill the National Palace Museum, which has a collection that spans more than 8,000 years of Chinese history. (Many artworks were taken from cultural institutions across mainland China when Chinese Nationalist forces fled to Taiwan in 1949.) Two of the most viewed pieces of art are the Jadeite Cabbage and Meat-Shaped Stone, both famous for the carved shapes that gave them their names.

Beitou
Ride Metro Taipei until the Xinbeitou stop to reach the famous hot springs district of Beitou, which has public baths as well as high-end Japanese-style resorts where visitors can enjoy naturally warm, skin-nourishing water.

Bonus: Located in Beitou Park near the Beitou Hot Spring Museum, the Beitou Public Library—the first "green" library in Taiwan, with a sloping turf roof—is a quiet place to relax after a soak in the springs.

TEXT & PHOTOGRAPHS BY **MATIKA WILBUR**

native

My name is Matika Wilbur. I am from the Swinomish and Tulalip Tribes. Ten years ago, I sold everything, packed my bags, and hit the open road to begin a Kickstarter-funded mission to visit, engage with, and photograph more than 500 tribal nations. I learned many lessons, the most fundamental being: **We are on Native land**. My new book, *Project 562*, documents hundreds of people I met and stories I heard, a selection of which are excerpted on the following pages.

North America is Indian Country. America's first people have a deep and knowing relationship with its lakes, rivers, cities, estuaries, canyons, and mountains. But the mainstream stories told to children in America fail to reflect this truth—as seen in the songs we teach, the holidays we celebrate, our romanticized tale of Hawai'i as a paradise vacationland (instead of an illegally annexed kingdom), and so much more.

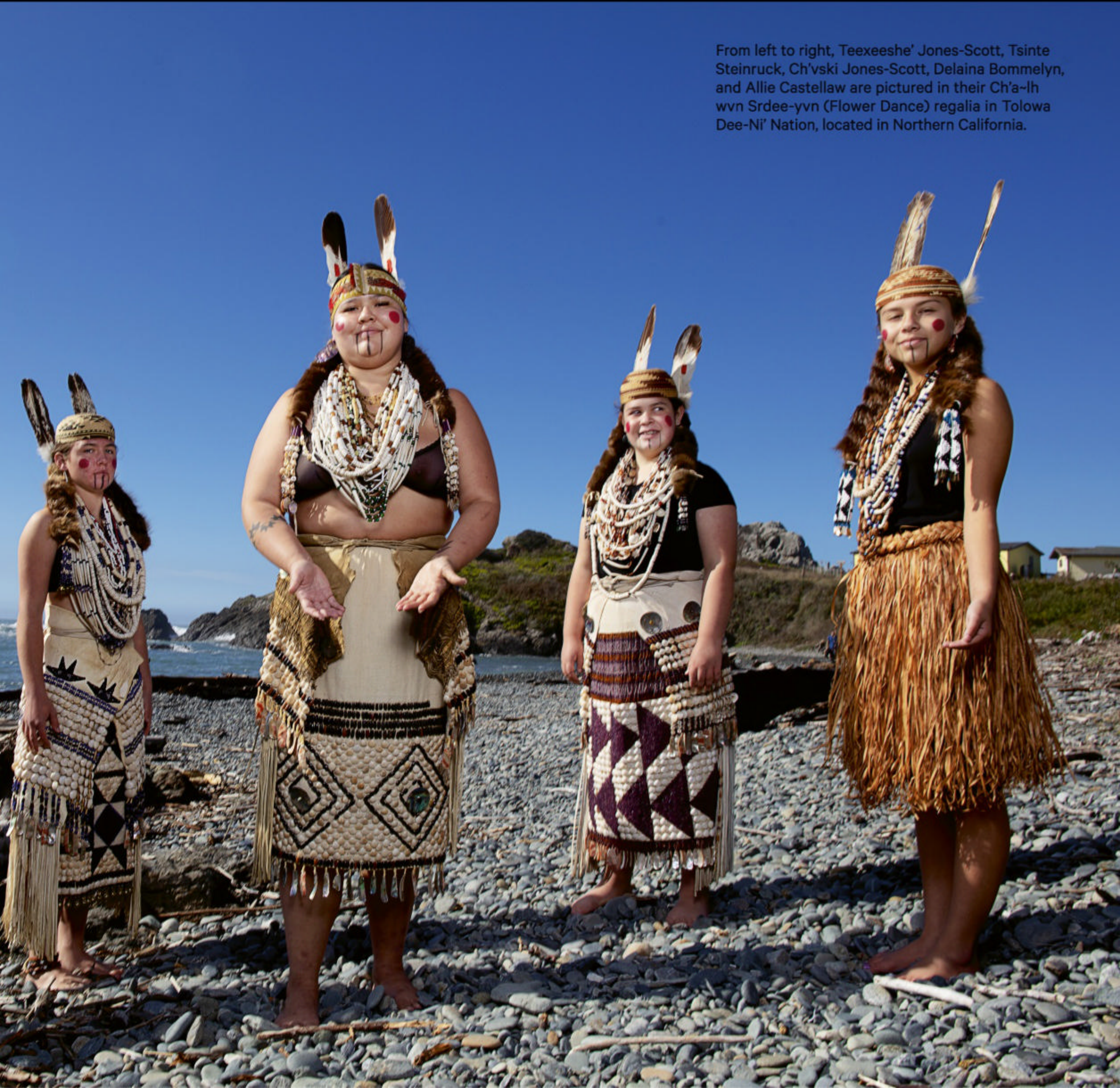
Together, these stories perpetuate a historical amnesia that negates treaty rights, dilutes Indigenous sovereignty, and overlooks Indigenous nationhood. My work is dedicated to uplifting the complexity, resilience, and joy of contemporary Native peoples, and in so doing, dissipating the archaic and racist invisibility our people have endured.

As we travel the country in search of adventure, let us do so—as we say in Indian Country—*in a good way*. What does that mean? It means that we educate ourselves about the historical origins of the lands we're visiting. We learn the Indigenous place names. We implement Indigenous values in our everyday lives, including principles such as the "seven generations," by which we make decisions based on the seven generations that came before us and the seven that will come after us. We can ask ourselves: *How might I make this place a little better than the way I found it? Can I support the Indigenous economy of the place I'm visiting?* Or better yet: *Is my presence here disruptive?*

The ongoing impacts of colonization are devastating and immeasurable. I believe that we all have the power to help combat these systemic oppressions. In our own small ways, we can each do the work to travel responsibly and give back in the midst of adventure.

Project 562: Changing the Way We See Native America (Ten Speed Press) is out now. Learn more at project562.com. Matika Wilbur is profiled on page 14.

america



From left to right, Teexeeshe' Jones-Scott, Tsinte Steinruck, Ch'vski Jones-Scott, Delaina Bommelyn, and Allie Castellaw are pictured in their Ch'a~lh wvn Srdee-yvn (Flower Dance) regalia in Tolowa Dee-Ni' Nation, located in Northern California.

Paula Peters

Mashpee Wampanoag

MASSACHUSETTS

[I met Paula Peters] on the storied shores of Cape Cod, a place iconic in the American imagination as an immensely beautiful, exclusive outpost of the rich and powerful. But the Cape, as it is known, is another place entirely when viewed through the lens of Indigeneity. This stunning seaside expanse in fact occupies the ancestral lands of the Wampanoag people, a "first contact" Nation with whites.

Paula collaborated with *Mayflower 400*, a retrospective multimedia project that commemorated the four-hundredth anniversary of the *Mayflower*'s arrival in North America. "For nearly four hundred years they have tried to erase us from the land without realizing how impossible that is," she told me. "We are the land, the land is us, and we are still here."

Rex Tilousi

Havasupai

ARIZONA

"One of them came down and said he was the Great White Father who lived in the big White House to the east," says Rex Tilousi, a member of the Havasupai Tribe. "He told us, 'You live in a very beautiful place where Mother Nature has been at work. We're going to call this place a national park. And the boundary that we are going to put around this canyon, you are not allowed to go behind.'

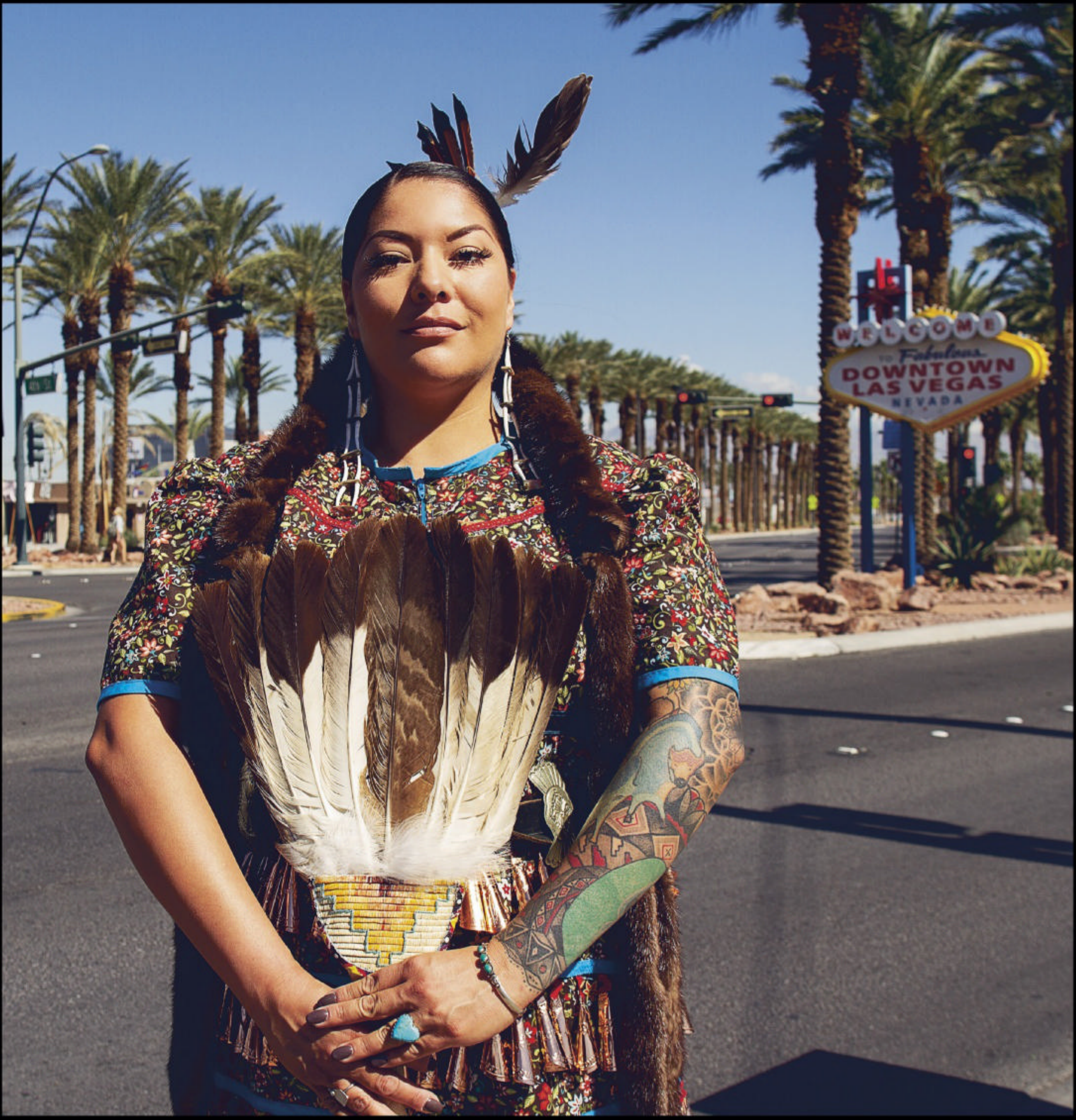
"We still speak for these things, we still fight for these things. The songs that are sung by the floodwaters, we still sing and dance to that music today.

"And that's what I want to share with those of you that want to know a little more about a place called the Grand Canyon, a little history of the things that we have lost, along with the language, the songs, the springs, the rock writings, the caves. To us, this is our Grand Mother Canyon."

The Grand Canyon

Havasupai, Southern Paiute, Hopi, Navajo, Apache, Yavapai, Zuni, Hualapai

ARIZONA



Fawn Douglas
Las Vegas Paiute

NEVADA

Fawn Douglas is pictured in front of the "Welcome to Fabulous Downtown Las Vegas" sign wearing a traditional Jingle Dress. Most people don't think of Las Vegas as a Native place, but for Fawn, it is her traditional homelands, and home to the Las Vegas Paiute community. Tourists seldom know that the Nuwuvi or Paiute people are the original keepers of that territory. Fawn explained that Las Vegas would not be the city it is today without the Nuwu—the Southern Paiute word for "the people." In fact, Fawn's grandpa Raymond Anderson (Ekyp) was a fabricator of the original "Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas" sign.

Dr. Noe Noe Wong-Wilson
Kānaka Maoli

HAWAIʻI

Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian people) have been fighting to stop the construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope since 2009. For Kānaka Maoli, Mauna Kea is considered the most sacred place. The destruction and ongoing desecration from tourism and the existing thirteen telescopes on Mauna Kea have been devastating to the mountain's fragile and unique ecosystem and are blatantly disrespectful to Kānaka cultural beliefs.

"*Āina*, land, is an inseparable part of our identity as Hawaiians," says Dr. Noe Noe Wong-Wilson, a professor, educator, cultural practitioner, and Native rights activist. "To see it abused in this way is painful to the soul. It's painful to our Native soul. That's why we stand."

TMT WILL NOT BE BUILT ON MAUNA KEA EVER

John Sneezy
San Carlos Apache

CALIFORNIA

For more than thirty years, John Sneezy danced in the powwow arena as a Grass Dancer, performing a modern men's dance. In 2016, he made the journey to the Bay Area American Indian Two-Spirit Powwow (BAAITS), where he felt safe to dance the way he'd always wanted: in the Traditional Cloth category, a graceful slow dance that is customarily danced by women.

He says, "I dance in honor of those who committed suicide because they couldn't handle the bullying. I dance for those who were murdered because they were transgendered or Two-Spirited or lesbian or gay.

"And so I feel when I come here and I dance, put all my heart into it, and I gather their spirit and release it into the arena, because they couldn't . . . it is a way to show that we can all be as one."

Duwamish Territory

WASHINGTON

The Coast Salish Sea is the life blood of our Coast Salish people. The dugout canoe served as our vessel to travel long distances, ensuring sufficient quantities of food, establishing and renewing Tribal alliances, and preserving social and ceremonial contacts, which, in turn, permitted our culture not only to survive but to flourish.

Our way of life remained that way until the colonizer arrived.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the federal government wanted our people to vacate our longhouses, to relocate to prisoner of war camps, now known as Reservations, and to distance ourselves from our traditional lifeways.

Our ancestors fled to the islands in their canoes. The feds responded by burning or sawing them in half. Even today you can visit our canoe bone yards.

The canoe is more than just a vessel to carry our bodies; it carries the hope and resiliency of our people. We are living in a time of cultural resurrection—the Coast Salish Sea beckons us to commune with the ocean in our traditional way. These spiritual voyages embody our indomitability and Indigenous sovereignty. This is a revolution.

The Everglades

Miccosukee, Seminole, Calusa, Ais, Jeaga, Tequesta

FLORIDA

Michael Frank
Miccosukee
FLORIDA

Michael Frank lives in one of the most extraordinary homelands—the vast "river of grass" of the Everglades, which in its natural state is a place of overflowing biodiversity that is at the core of Miccosukee identity and lifeways. Michael is a tireless steward and activist for his people and homelands.

"We want to keep our culture and our traditional life," he says. "We are very strict on who can live here. That protects our sovereignty."

This struggle began with the genocidal anti-Indian military campaign, the Indian Removal Act enacted under President Andrew Jackson, commonly known as the Trail of Tears. The Miccosukee were removed from the South, but about one hundred remained, hiding out in traditional camps on islands in their territory and carefully preserving their way of life.

Ruth Demmert
Tlingit
ALASKA

Ruth Demmert is a distinguished educator who has enriched the lives of many people through Western curriculum development and teaching Tlingit language, songs and dances, and proper drumming techniques: "We still push education, but we also push our culture on them, especially the values. *Respect for oneself. Respect for others. Respect for elders. Respect for the land and what it has to offer us.*

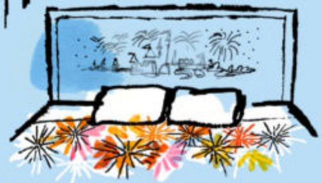
"When you look at the younger children proudly doing what they were taught, you know that your culture will survive through them. I am glad that I was a part of it. Some of the mothers were pregnant with their babies when they joined the dance group, and their babies just love it now. They love the drumming. It must be just like hearing their mother's heartbeats." Ⓐ

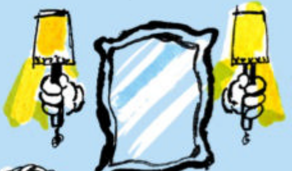
I'm Going to Disneyland! (for the Design)

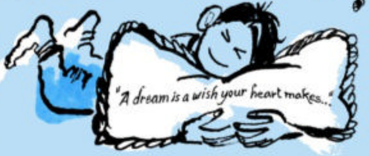
by **LAUREN TAMAKI**

Disney is woven into my being: I wore out my *Sword in the Stone* VHS when I was a kid, and a couple of years ago, I even acquired a *Fantasia* tattoo. As I've grown up, so has my awareness of the corporation's complexities, but I recently jumped at the chance to visit California's Disneyland. To my delight, I was charmed by the design details that welcomed me at every turn.

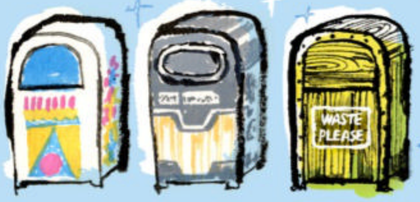
My dad splashed out on suites at the Disneyland Hotel and I loved the creative touches that permeated the space, which ranged from subtle to very, very extra.



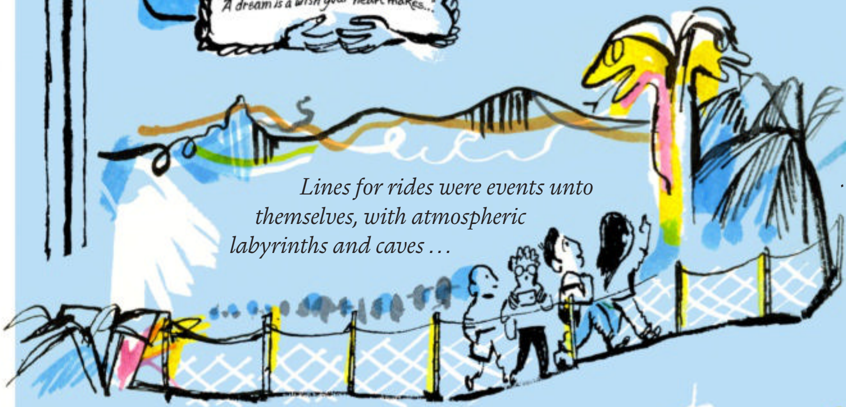



"A dream is a wish your heart makes..."

I found myself beguiled by . . . the trash cans.



If you're ever lost, find a trash can—located every 30 feet—and the painted exterior will tell you if you're flitting around Fantasyland or storm-trooping in Star Wars *land.*

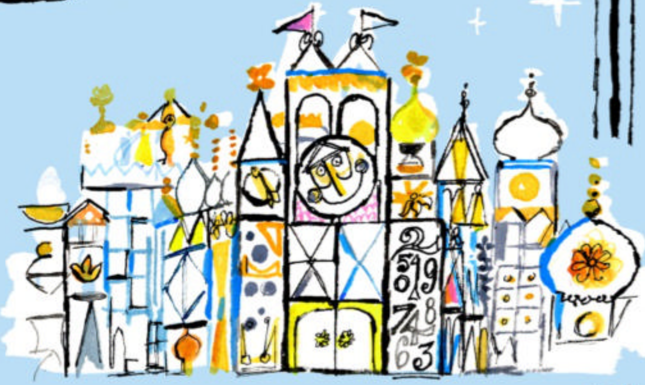


Lines for rides were events unto themselves, with atmospheric labyrinths and caves . . .

. . . often delivering more joy than the main attraction.

I was gobsmacked by the exterior of "it's a small world."

The late Imagineer Rolly Crump designed the facade based on Mary Blair's styling, and it still sparkles after almost 60 years. It's a silly symphony of midcentury modernism, featuring iconic structures from around the world. India's Taj Mahal and a German glockenspiel clock tower are artfully integrated.



I wondered if I could be an Imagineer, toiling away in some basement trying to reach Crump's level of craft.

I'll never be a "Disney adult" with season passes and a wedding at Sleeping Beauty's castle . . .

. . . but I'll always adore the Disney details.

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